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FROM

Mrs. John Edsall

THE

NEW LIFE

OF

DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

Però se le mie rime avran difetto,
Ch' entreran nella loda di costei,
Di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto,
E 'l parlar nostro, che non ha valore
Di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore.

DANTE.

BOSTON
TICKNOR AND FIELDS
1867

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THE NEW LIFE.

I.

In that part of the book of my memory before which little can be read is found a rubric which sayeth, *Incipit Vita Nova.* Under which rubric I find the words written which it is my intention to copy into this little book, — and if not all of them, at least their meaning.

II.

Nine times now, since my birth, had the heaven of light turned almost to the same point in its own gyration, when first appeared before mine eyes the glorious Lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore she was so called. She had already been in this life so long that in its course the starred heaven had moved toward the region of the East one of the twelve parts of a degree; so that at about the beginning of her ninth year she appeared to me, and I near the end of my

ninth year saw her. She appeared to me clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson, garlanded and adorned in such wise as befitted her very youthful age. At that instant, I say truly that the spirit of life which dwelleth in the most secret chamber of the heart began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and trembling said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.*

At that instant the intellectual spirit, which dwelleth in the high chamber to which all the spirits of the senses carry their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, speaking especially to the spirit of the sight, said these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra.* At that instant the natural spirit, which dwelleth in that part where our nourishment is supplied, began to weep, and, weeping, said these words: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps.*

From this time forward I say that Love lorded it over my soul, which had so suddenly inclined to him; and he began to exercise over me such control and such lordship, through the power which my imagination gave to him, that it behooved me to do completely all his pleasure. He commanded me ofttimes that I should

seek to see this youthful angel, so that I in my boyhood often went seeking her, and saw her of such noble and praiseworthy deportment, that truly of her might be said that word of the poet Homer, "She seemeth not the daughter of mortal man, but of God." And albeit her image, which stayed constantly with me, gave boldness to Love to hold lordship over me, yet it was of such noble virtue that it never suffered that Love should rule me without the faithful counsel of the reason in those matters in which it were useful to hear such counsel. And since to dwell upon the passions and actions of such early youth appeareth like telling an idle tale, I will leave them, and, passing over many things which might be drawn from the original where these lie hidden, I will come to those words which are written in my memory under larger paragraphs.

III.

When so many days had passed that exactly nine years were completed since the above-described apparition of this most gentle lady, on the last of these days it came to pass that this admirable lady appeared before me clothed in purest white, between two gentle ladies who were of

greater age, and, passing along a street, turned her eyes toward that place where I stood very timidly; and by her ineffable courtesy, which is now rewarded in the eternal world, saluted me with such virtue that it seemed to me then that I beheld all the bounds of bliss. The hour when her most sweet salutation reached me was exactly the ninth of that day; and since it was the first time that her words came to mine ears, I took in such sweetness, that, as it were intoxicated, I turned away from the crowd; and, betaking myself to the solitude of mine own chamber, I sat myself down to think of this most courteous lady. And thinking of her, a sweet slumber overcame me, in which a marvellous vision appeared to me; for methought I saw in my chamber a cloud of the color of fire, within which I discerned a form of a Lord of aspect fearful to whoso should look upon him; and he seemed to me so joyful within himself that a marvellous thing it was; and in his words he spake many things which I understood not save a few, among which I understood these: *Ego Dominus tuus.* In his arms meseemed to see a person sleeping, naked, save that she seemed to me to be wrapped lightly in a blood-red cloth; whom I, regarding very intently, recognized as the Lady of the Salutation, who had the day

before deigned to salute me. And in one of his hands it seemed to me that he held a thing which was all on fire; and it seemed to me that he said these words to me: *Vide cor tuum.* And when he had remained awhile, it seemed to me that he awoke her that slept; and he so far prevailed upon her with his craft as to make her eat that thing which was burning in his hand; and she ate it as one in fear. After this, it was but a short while before his joy turned into most bitter lament; and as he wept he gathered up this lady in his arms, and with her it seemed to me that he went away toward heaven. Whereat I felt such great anguish, that my weak slumber could not endure it, but was broken, and I awoke. And straightway I began to reflect, and found that the hour in which this vision had appeared to me had been the fourth of the night; so that, as manifestly appears, it was the first hour of the nine last hours of the night. And thinking on what had appeared to me, I resolved to make it known to many who were famous poets at that time; and since I had already seen in myself the art of discoursing in rhyme, I resolved to make a sonnet in which I would salute all the liegemen of Love, and, praying them to give an interpretation of my vision, would write to them that which I had seen in my slumber. And I began then this sonnet: —

To every captive soul and gentle heart
  Before whose sight may come the present word,
  That they thereof to me their thoughts impart,
  Be greeting in Love's name, who is their Lord.
Now of those hours wellnigh one third had gone
  What time doth every star appear most bright,
  When on a sudden Love before me shone,
  Remembrance of whose nature gives me fright.
Joyful to me seemed Love, and he was keeping
  My heart within his hands, while on his arm
  He held my lady, covered o'er, and sleeping.
Then waking her, he with this flaming heart
  Did humbly feed her, fearful of some harm.
  Thereon I saw him thence in tears depart.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first part I offer greeting, and ask for a reply; in the second I signify to what the reply is to be made. The second part beginneth here: "Now of."

This sonnet was replied to by many, and of diverse opinions. Among those who replied to it was he whom I call first of my friends, and he wrote then a sonnet which began, "All worth, in my opinion, thou hast seen." And this was, as it were, the beginning of the friendship between him and me, when he knew that

I was he who had sent it to him. The true meaning of this dream was not then seen by any one, but now it is plain to the simplest.

IV.

After this vision my natural spirit began to be hindered in its operation, for my soul was wholly given over to the thought of this most gentle lady; whereby in brief time I fell into so frail and feeble a condition, that my appearance was grievous to many of my friends; and many full of envy eagerly sought to know from me that which above all I wished to conceal from others. And I, perceiving their evil questioning, through the will of Love who commanded me according to the counsel of the reason, replied to them, that it was Love who had brought me to this pass. I spoke of Love, because I bore on my face so many of his signs that this could not be concealed. And when they asked me, "For whom has Love thus wasted thee?" I, smiling, looked at them and said nothing.

V.

One day it happened that this most gentle lady was sitting where words concerning the Queen of Glory were

to be heard; and I was in a place from which I saw my bliss. And between her and me in a straight line sat a gentle lady of very pleasing aspect, who looked at me ofttimes, wondering at my gaze, which seemed as if it ended upon her; whereby many were ware of her looking. And such note was taken of this, that, departing from this place, behind me I heard say, "Behold how that lady wastes the life of this man"; and naming her, I understood that they spake of her who had been in the path of the straight line which, parting from the most gentle Beatrice, had ended in my eyes. Then I took great comfort, being sure that my secret had not been communicated to others on that day through mine eyes; and at once I thought to make of this gentle lady a screen of the truth; and in a short time such show I made of it that many persons who held discourse about me believed that they knew my secret. With this lady I dissembled for some months and years; and in order to establish in others a firmer credence, I wrote for her certain trifles in rhyme, which it is not my intention to transcribe here save in so far as they may serve to treat of that most gentle Beatrice; and therefore I will leave them all, save that I will write somewhat thereof which seemeth to be praise of her.

VI.

I SAY that, during the time while this lady was the screen of so great a love as possessed me, the will came to me to record the name of that most gentle one, and to unite it with many names of ladies, and especially with the name of this gentlewoman; and I took the names of sixty of the most beautiful ladies of the city where my lady had been placed by the Most High Lord, and I composed an epistle in the form of a *sirvente*, which I will not transcribe; and of which I would not have made mention, but for the sake of telling this which fell out marvellously in its composition, namely, that in no other place was the name of my lady suffered to stand, but as the ninth in order among the names of these ladies.

VII.

THE lady with whom I had so long concealed my desire was obliged to depart from the above-mentioned city, and go to a distant place; whereat I, wellnigh despairing by reason of the fair defence which had failed me, did more discomfort me than I myself would beforehand have believed. And, thinking that, if I did

not speak somewhat grievingly of her departure, people would sooner become acquainted with my secret, I resolved to make some lament for it in a sonnet, which I will transcribe because my lady was the immediate occasion of certain words which are in the sonnet, as is evident to whoever understandeth it; and then I devised this sonnet: —

O ye who turn your steps along Love's way,
  Consider, and then say,
  If there be any grief than mine more great:
  That ye to hear me deign, I only pray,
  Then fancy, as ye may,
  If I am every torment's inn and gate.
'T was not my little goodness to repay,
  But largess to display,
  Love gave me such a sweet and pleasant fate,
  That many times I heard behind me say,
  "Ah, through what merit, pray,
  Hath this man's heart become so light of late?"
But now my hardihood is wholly fled,
  Which came from out a treasure of Love's own,
  And I stay poor alone,
  So that of speech there cometh to me dread:
Thus wishing now to do like unto one

Who, out of shame, concealeth his disgrace,
I wear a joyful face,
While in my heart I waste away and groan.

This sonnet hath two principal parts; for in the first I intend to call the liegemen of Love with those words of Jeremy the prophet: Oh vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus; *and to pray them to listen to me. In the second I relate where Love had set me, with other intent than that which the last parts of the sonnet indicate; and I tell that which I have lost. The second part beginneth here:* "'T was not my."

VIII.

After the departure of this gentlewoman it pleased the Lord of the Angels to call unto His glory a lady young and of exceeding gentle aspect, who had been very lovely in the above-mentioned city; whose body I saw lying without its soul, in midst of many ladies who were weeping very pitifully. Then, remembering that formerly I had seen her in company with that most gentle one, I could not restrain some tears; nay, weeping, I resolved to say some words about her death,

in guerdon for that I had seen her sometimes with my lady. And thereon I touched somewhat in the last part of the words that I said of her, as plainly appeareth to him who understandeth them. And I devised then these two sonnets; the first of which beginneth, *Lovers, lament;* the second, *Discourteous death:* —

Lovers, lament, (since Love himself now cries,)
  Hearing what cause now maketh him to weep.
  Love seëth ladies mourn in sorrow deep,
  Showing their bitter grieving through their eyes;
Because discourteous Death in gentle heart
  Hath wrought a cruel, unrelenting deed,
  Destroying all, excepting honor's meed,
  To which in gentle dame men praise impart.
Hear ye what honor Love to her did pay;
  For him in real form I saw make moan
  Over the lovely image of the dead;
And oft toward the heaven he raised his head,
  Where that fair soul already hath her wone,
  That had been mistress of a shape so gay.

This first sonnet is divided into three parts. In the first, I call and solicit the liegemen of Love to weep; and I say that their Lord weepeth, and that, hearing the cause why he weepeth, they should be the more ready to listen to me. In the

second, I relate the cause. In the third, I speak of certain honor that Love paid to this lady. The second part beginneth here: "Love seëth"; *the third, here:* "Hear ye."

Discourteous Death, of clemency the foe,
  Mother from old of woe,
  O judgment irresistible, severe,
  Since thou hast burdened this sad heart with care,
  Therefore in grief I go,
  And blaming thee my very tongue outwear.
And if of every grace I'd strip thee bare,
  It needs that I declare
  The wrong of wrongs in this thy guilty blow;
  Not that the folk do not already know,
  But to make each thy foe,
  Who henceforth shall be nurtured with Love's care.
From out the world thou courtesy hast ta'en,
  And virtue, which in woman is to praise;
  And in youth's gayest days
  The charm of love thou hast untimely slain.
Who is this lady I will not declare,
  Save as her qualities be known by this:
  Whoso deserves not bliss
  Let him not hope her company to share.

This sonnet is divided into four parts. In the first I

call Death by certain names proper to her; in the second, speaking to her, I tell the reason why I am moved to reproach her; in the third, I revile her; in the fourth, I turn to speak to a person indefinite, howbeit as regardeth my meaning definite. The second part beginneth here: "Since thou"; *the third, here:* "And if of every grace"; *the fourth, with* "Who merits."

IX.

Some days after the death of this lady, a thing happened wherefore it behooved me to leave the above-mentioned city, and to go toward those parts where that gentle lady was who had been my defence, albeit the end of my journey was not distant so far as she was. And notwithstanding I was outwardly in company with many, the journey displeased me, so that hardly could sighs relieve the anguish that the heart felt, because I was going away from my bliss. And then that most sweet Lord, who was lording it over me through virtue of the most gentle lady, appeared in my imagination like a pilgrim, lightly clad and in mean raiment. He seemed disheartened, and was looking upon the ground, save that sometimes it seemed to me that his eyes were turned upon a beautiful running and very

clear stream, which was flowing along by the road upon which I was. It seemed to me that Love called me, and said to me these words: "I come from that lady who has been so long thy defence, and I know that she will not come back; and therefore that heart which I made thee keep with her I have it with me, and I carry it to a lady who will be thy defence, as this one was"; (and he called her by name, so that I knew her well.) "Nathless, of these words which I have spoken unto thee, if thou shouldst tell any of them, tell them in such wise that the feigned love that thou hast shown for this lady, and which it will behoove thee to show for another, shall not be revealed through them." And when he had thus spoken, all this my imagination disappeared of a sudden, through the exceeding great part of himself which, it seemed to me, Love bestowed on me. And, as if changed in my aspect, I rode that day very pensive and accompanied by many sighs. After that day I began this sonnet: —

As I the other day rode far from glad
  Along a way it pleased me not to take,
  I came on Love, who did the journey make,
  In the light garment of a pilgrim clad.
His countenance, it seemed to me, was sad,

As if he grieved for his lost lordship's sake;
And full of care, his sighs did ofttimes wake;
Not to be seen, his head bowed down he had.
When me he saw, by name he called to me
And said, "I come from that far distant part
Where through my will thy heart did dwell of late.
I bring it now on new delight to wait."
Then I received of him so great a part
That quick he vanished; how, I did not see.

This sonnet hath three parts. In the first part I tell how I found Love, and what he seemed to me; in the second, I tell that which he said to me, albeit not completely, through the fear that I had of disclosing my secret; in the third, I tell how he disappeared. The second beginneth here: "When me he saw"; *the third, here:* "Then I received."

X.

After my return, I set myself to seek out that lady whom my Lord had named to me on the road of sighs. And to the end that my speech may be more brief, I say that in short time I made her my defence to such degree that too many people spoke of it beyond the terms of courtesy, wherefore many times it weighed

heavily upon me. And on this account, namely, because of that wanton talk, which seemed to impute vice to me, that most gentle lady, who was the destroyer of all the vices and the queen of the virtues, passing by a certain place, denied me her most sweet salute, in which lay all my bliss. And departing a little from the present theme, I will declare with what virtue her greeting wrought in me.

XI.

I SAY, that whenever she appeared in any place, in the hope of her marvellous salutation there no longer remained to me an enemy; nay, a flame of charity possessed me, which made me pardon every one who had done me wrong; and had any one at that time questioned me of anything, my only answer would have been "Love," and my face would have been clothed with humility. And when she was about to salute me, a spirit of Love, destroying all the other spirits of the senses, urged forth the feeble spirits of the sight, and said to them, "Go and do honor to your lady," and he remained in their place. And whoever had wished to know Love might have done so by looking at the trembling of my eyes. And when this most gentle lady saluted me, not

only Love had no power to shade for me the insupportable bliss; but he, as if through excess of sweetness, became such that my body, which was wholly under his rule, oftentimes moved like a heavy, inanimate thing; so that it plainly appeareth that in her salutation abode my bliss, which oftentimes surpassed and overflowed my capacity.

XII.

Now returning to my theme, I say that, after my bliss was denied to me, such grief came to me that, withdrawing from men, I went into a solitary place to bathe the earth with most bitter tears. And when this weeping was a little assuaged, I betook myself to my chamber, where I could lament without being heard. And here, calling upon the lady of courtesy for pity, and saying, "Love, help thy liegeman!" I fell asleep, like a little beaten child, in tears. It happened about the middle of my sleep, that I seemed to see in my chamber a youth sitting by my side, clothed in whitest raiment, and very thoughtful. His eyes were turned upon me where I lay; and when he had looked upon me for some space, it seemed to me that, sighing, he called me and said to me these words: *Fili mi, tempus est ut prætermit-*

tantur simulata nostra. Then it seemed to me that I recognized him, since he called me in like manner as he had many times before called me in my slumbers. And, looking at me, it seemed to me that he wept piteously, and it seemed that he waited for some word from me. Wherefore, taking heart, I began to speak thus with him: "Lord of nobleness, why dost thou weep?" And he said to me these words: *Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiæ partes; tu autem non sic.* Then, thinking on his words, it seemed to me that he had spoken very obscurely, so that I forced myself to speak, and said to him these words: "What is this, Lord, that thou sayest to me with such obscurity?" And he said to me in the common tongue: "Ask no more than may be useful to thee." And therefore I began to discourse with him of the salutation which had been denied me, and I asked of him the reason, whereupon in this wise he replied to me: "This our Beatrice heard from certain persons who talked of thee, that the lady whom I named to thee on the road of sighs was receiving through thee some harm. And therefore this most gentle lady, who is adverse to every harm, did not deign to salute thy person, fearing lest it should be harmful. Wherefore, albeit that of a truth

thy secret through long usage be in some measure known to her, I will that thou say certain words in rhyme, in which thou shalt set forth the power that I hold over thee through her, and how thou wert straightway hers even from thy boyhood; and for this call as a witness him who knoweth it, and also do thou pray him that he should tell it to her. And I, who am he, willingly will speak to her of it; and through this she shall understand thy will, and, understanding it, shall interpret aright the words of the deceived. Make, as it were, an intercessor of these words, so that thou speak not to her directly, for this is not befitting. And send them nowhere without me, whereby they might be heard by her, but take care to adorn them with sweet harmony, wherein I shall be whenever there shall be need." And having said these words he disappeared, and my sleep was broken. Then I, remembering myself, found that this vision had appeared to me at the ninth hour of the day; and before I went out from that chamber I resolved to make a ballad in which I would accomplish that which my Lord had laid upon me, and I made this ballad: —

Ballad, I send thee forth upon Love's trace,
For thou must him before my Lady bring,

So that of my excuse, which thou dost sing,
My Lord may then with her speak face to face.

Such courteous aspect, Ballad, thou dost show,
That all alone, indeed,
Thou oughtest not in any place to fear;
But if securely thou dost wish to go,
First to find Love is need,
For ill it were without Him to appear;
Seeing that she who ought thy words to hear,
If she be angry, as I think, with me,
And thou with Him companioned should not be,
Might lightly make thee fall into disgrace.

With sweet sound, when before her thou mayst be,
Begin with words like these,
First begging her that she would pity take: —
"Lady, he who to you now sendeth me
Wills, when to you it please,
That his excuse you deign to hear me make.
Love is that one who, for thy beauty's sake,
Makes him, as He doth will, his looks to change;
Then why He made his eyes on others range,
Think you, since in his heart no change hath place."

Tell her: "O Lady, this his heart is stayed
With faith so firmly just,

Save to serve you it hath no other care.
Early 't was yours, and never hath it strayed."
But if she thee distrust,
Say, "Ask of Love, who will the truth declare."
And at the end, beg her, with humble prayer,
That if it trouble her to pardon give,
She then should bid that I no longer live,
Nor shall she see her servant sue for grace.

And say to Him who is compassion's key,
Ere from her thou depart,
For He can tell her of my reason fair, —
"Through favor unto my sweet melody,
Stay with her where thou art,
And of thy servant, what thou wilt, declare.
And if she grant forgiveness through thy prayer,
Make peace on her fair countenance to shine."
When it may please thee, gentle Ballad mine,
Go forth to conquer honor in thy race.

This ballad is divided into three parts. In the first, I tell it whither it is to go, and encourage it that it may go the more assured. And I tell whose company it is to seek, if it wisheth to go boldly, and without any danger. In the second, I tell that which it is beholden to make known. In the third, I give

it leave to go when it will, commending its going to the arms of Fortune. The second part beginneth, "With sweet sound"; *the third,* "When it may please thee." *Some man might object against me and say, that he understandeth not to whom my speech in the second person is addressed, since the ballad is naught else but these words which I am speaking, and therefore I say that I intend to solve and clear up this doubt in this little book, even in a more difficult passage; and then let him understand who may here be in doubt, or who may here choose to object, after this fashion.*

XIII.

After this above-described vision, having now spoken the words that Love had imposed on me to speak, many and diverse thoughts began to assail me, and each to try me as it were without defence. Among which thoughts four chiefly hindered the repose of my life. One of them was this: "The lordship of Love is good, in that it withdraweth the inclination of his liegeman from all vile things." The next was this: "The lordship of Love is not good, because the more fidelity his liegeman beareth to him, so much the heavier and more grievous trials he must needs endure." The next was this: "The name

of Love is so sweet to hear, that it seemeth to me impossible that his effects in most things should be other than sweet, seeing that names follow the things named, as it is written, *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum.*" The fourth was this: "The Lady for whom Love thus distresseth thee is not as other ladies whose hearts are lightly moved." And each thought so assailed me that it made me stand like one who knoweth not by which way to take his journey, who desireth to go, and knoweth not whither he should go. And if I thought of desiring to seek a way common to them, namely, that wherein all would accord, this way was very hateful to me, namely, to call upon and put myself into the arms of Pity. And while I abode in this condition, the will came to me to write some rhymed words thereon, and I devised then this sonnet: —

All of my thoughts concerning Love discourse,
  And have in them so great variety,
  That one to wish his sway compelleth me,
  Another madly doth dispute his force.
One, hoping, bringeth unto me delight,
  Another maketh me ofttimes lament;
  Only in craving Pity they consent,
  Trembling with fear that in my heart hath site.

Thus know I not from which my theme to take;
  I fain would speak, and know not what to say;
  In such perplexities of love I live:
And if with all to make accord I strive,
  I needs unto my very foe must pray,
  My Lady Pity, my defence to make.

This sonnet may be divided into four parts. In the first, I say and declare that all my thoughts are concerning Love. In the second, I say that they are diverse, and I relate their diversity. In the third, I say in what they all seem to accord. In the fourth, I say that, wishing to speak of Love, I know not from which to take my theme, and if I wish to take it from them all, I needs must call upon my foe, my Lady Pity. I say my Lady, as it were in a scornful mode of speech. The second beginneth here: "And have in them"; *the third,* "Only in craving"; *the fourth,* "Thus know I."

XIV.

After the battle of the diverse thoughts, it happened that this most gentle lady went to a place where many gentlewomen were assembled; to which place I was conducted by a friendly person, who thought to give me a great pleasure in leading me where so many ladies were

displaying their beauties. Wherefore I, hardly knowing whereunto I had been led, and trusting myself to the person who had conducted his friend to the verge of life, said, "Wherefore are we come to these ladies?" Then he said to me, "To the end that they may be worthily served." And the truth is, that they were met together here to attend a gentlewoman who was married that day, and therefore, according to the custom of the above-mentioned city, it behooved them to bear her company at her first sitting at table in the house of her new husband. So that I, believing to do the pleasure of this friend, proposed to stand in company with him at the service of the ladies. And as soon as I had thus resolved, I seemed to feel a wonderful tremor begin in my breast on the left side, and extend suddenly through all the parts of my body. Then I say that, dissembling, I leaned against a painting which ran around the wall of this house, and, fearing lest my trembling should be observed by others, I lifted mine eyes, and, looking at the ladies, saw among them the most gentle Beatrice. Then were my spirits so destroyed by the force that Love gathered, on seeing himself in such neighborhood to this most gentle lady, that none remained alive except the spirits of sight, and even these remained outside of their instru-

ments, since Love wished to stand in their most honorable place to look upon this marvellous lady. And howbeit I was other than at first, I grieved much for these little spirits, who were lamenting bitterly, and saying, "If he so like a thunderbolt had not smitten us from our place, we might stand to gaze upon the marvel of this lady, as do the others our peers." I say that many of these ladies, perceiving my transfiguration, began to wonder, and, talking with this most gentle lady, made a mock of me. Thereupon my friend, perceiving this, in good faith took me by the hand, and, leading me out from the sight of these ladies, asked me what ailed me. Then, having somewhat reposed, and my dead spirits having risen again, and those that were driven out having returned to their possessions, I said to this my friend these words: "I have set my feet on that edge of life beyond which no man can go with intent to return." And leaving him, I returned to the chamber of tears, in which, weeping and ashamed, I said within myself, "If this lady knew my condition, I do not believe that she would thus have made mock of my person, nay, I believe that she would feel much pity therefor." And being in this grief, I resolved to say some words in which, speaking to her, I would explain the cause of

my transfigurement, and would say that I know well that she had no knowledge thereof, and that, had it been known, I believe that it would move others to pity. And I resolved to say them, desiring that peradventure they might come to her hearing. And then I devised this sonnet: —

With other ladies you make mock of me,
  And think not, Lady, of the reason why
  So strange a shape I offer to your eye,
  Whene'er it hap that I your beauty see.
If this you knew, your pity could not hold
  Longer against me its accustomed guise;
  For when so near you Love doth me surprise,
  He courage takes and such assurance bold,
He smites among my spirits chilled with fear,
  And some he slays, and some he doth expel,
  So he alone remains to look on you;
Hence I another's form am changed into,
  Yet not so changed but even then full well
  The grievous cries of those expelled I hear.

This sonnet I do not divide into parts, because the division is made only for the sake of disclosing the meaning of the thing divided; therefore, since the occasion already described maketh this sufficiently plain, there is no need of division.

It is true that among the words whereby the occasion of this sonnet is set forth, certain dubious words are found; namely, when I say that Love slayeth all my spirits, and only those of vision remain alive, but they outside of their instruments. And this difficulty it were impossible to solve to one who is not in like degree the liegeman of Love; and to such as are so, that is already plain which would solve these dubious words; and therefore it is not well for me to explain this difficulty, since my speech would be in vain or superfluous.

XV.

After this new transfiguration, a strong thought came to me which seldom left me, nay, rather continually recurred to me, and held this discourse with me: "Since thou presentest so contemptible an appearance when thou art near this lady, why then seekest thou to see her? Behold, if she were to ask thee this, what wouldst thou have to answer? supposing that all thy faculties were free, so that thou couldst answer her." And to this another humble thought replied, and said, "If I lost not my faculties and were free so that I could answer, I should say to her, that so soon as I picture to myself her marvellous beauty, so soon a desire to see her comes to

me, which is of such great virtue that it slayeth and destroyeth in my memory that which might rise against it, and therefore past sufferings hold me not back from seeking the sight of her." Wherefore, moved by such thoughts, I resolved to say certain words, in which, excusing myself to her from blame on this account, I would also set down what befell me in her presence; and I devised this sonnet: —

That which opposeth in my mind doth die
  Whene'er I come to see you, beauteous Joy!
  And I hear Love say, when to you I 'm nigh,
  "Begone, if death be unto thee annoy."
My face the color of my heart displays,
  Which, fainting, any chance support doth seek;
  And as I tremble in my drunken daze,
  Die! die! the very stones appear to shriek.
He who may then behold me doeth ill
  If my affrighted soul he doth not aid,
  Showing at least that me he pitieth
For that distress the which your scorn doth kill,
  And which is in the lifeless look displayed
  Of eyes which have a longing for their death.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I tell the reason why I abstain not from seeking the presence of

this lady; in the second, I speak of that which befalleth me when I draw nigh to her, and this part beginneth here: "And I hear Love." *And this second part is also divided into five, according to the five different facts related; for in the first I tell that which Love counselled by the reason saith to me when I am near her; in the second, I set forth the state of my heart by the example of my face; in the third, I tell how every reliance faileth me; in the fourth, I say that he sinneth who showeth not pity for me, inasmuch as this would be some comfort to me; in the last, I say why others ought to have pity, namely, for the piteous look which cometh into mine eyes, which piteous look is destroyed, that is, appeareth not unto others, through the derision of this lady which draweth to the like behavior those who perchance would see this woe. The second part beginneth here:* "My face"; *the third,* "And as I tremble"; *the fourth,* "He who may then"; *the fifth,* "For that distress."

XVI.

After what I have said, this sonnet roused in me a wish to say also some words in which I would tell four things further in regard to my state which it seemed

to me had not yet been made manifest by me. The first of which truly is, that ofttimes I grieved when my memory excited my fancy to imagine what Love made me; the second is, that ofttimes Love assailed me with such force that naught remained alive in me save one thought which spake of my lady; the third is, that, when this onset of Love thus attacked me, I went almost altogether pale to look on this lady, believing that the sight of her would be my defence from this attack, forgetting that which befell me in approaching gentleness so great; the fourth is, how this sight not only defended me not, but finally discomfited my little remaining life. And therefore I devised this sonnet: —

The dark condition Love doth on me lay
  Many a time occurs unto my thought,
  And then comes pity, so that oft I say,
  Ah me! to such a pass was man e'er brought?
For Love with me so suddenly doth strive,
  That my life almost doth abandon me;
  And but one spirit doth escape alive,
  And that remains because it speaks of thee.
Then to mine aid I summon all my strength,
  And so, half dead, and void of all defence,
  I seek thy sight, thinking to be made whole,

And if to look I lift mine eyes at length,
Within my heart an earthquake doth commence,
Which from my pulses driveth out the soul.

This sonnet is divided into four parts, inasmuch as four things are related in it; and since these are spoken of above, I concern myself only to distinguish the parts by their beginnings. Wherefore I say that the second part beginneth here: "For Love"; *the third, here:* "I force me then"; *the fourth,* "And if to look."

XVII.

After I had devised these three sonnets, in which I addressed this lady, since they left little of my condition untold, I thought to be silent, because it seemed to me that I had sufficiently disclosed myself. Albeit I never again were to address her, it behooved me to take up a new theme, and one more noble than the foregoing. And because the occasion of the new theme is pleasant to hear, I will tell it as briefly as I can.

XVIII.

Inasmuch as through my looks many persons had learned the secret of my heart, certain ladies who were

met together, taking pleasure in one another's company, were well acquainted with my heart, because each of them had witnessed many of my discomfitures. And I, passing near them, as chance led me, was called unto by one of these gentlewomen; and she who had called me was a lady of very pleasing speech; so that, when I drew nigh to them and saw plainly that my most gentle lady was not among them, reassuring myself, I saluted them, and asked what might be their pleasure. The ladies were many, and certain of them were laughing together. There were others who looked at me, awaiting what I might say. There were others who were talking together, one of whom, turning her eyes toward me and calling me by name, said these words: "To what end lovest thou this thy lady, since thou canst not sustain her presence? Tell us, for sure the end of such a love must be most strange." And when she had said these words to me, not only she, but all the others, began to await with their eyes my reply. Then I said to them these words: "My ladies, the end of my love was formerly the salutation of this lady of whom you perchance are thinking, and in that dwelt the beatitude which was the end of all my desires. But since it has pleased her to deny it to me, my lord Love, through his

grace, hath placed all my beatitude in that which cannot fail me." Then these ladies began to speak together; and as sometimes we see rain falling mingled with beautiful snow, so it seemed to me I saw their words mingled with sighs. And after they had somewhat spoken among themselves, this lady who had first spoken to me said to me these words: "We pray thee that thou tell us wherein consists this beatitude of thine." And I, replying to her, said thus: "In those words which praise my lady." And she replied: "If thou hast said truth in this, those words which thou hast spoken, setting forth thine own condition, must have been composed with other intent." Then I, thinking on these words, and as if ashamed, departed from them, and went saying within myself: "Since there is such beatitude in those words which praise my lady, why hath my speech been of aught else?" And I proposed to take for theme of my speech always henceforward that which should be the praise of this most gentle one. And thinking much on this, I seemed to myself to have undertaken a theme too lofty for me, so that I dared not to begin; and thus I tarried some days with desire to speak, and with fear of beginning.

XIX.

THEN it came to pass that, walking along a road by the side of which there ran a stream of clearest water, so great a desire to say somewhat in verse came upon me, that I began to consider the method I should observe; and I thought that to speak of her would not be becoming unless I were to speak to ladies in the second person,—and not to every lady, but only to those who are gentle, and are not women merely. Then I say that my tongue spake as if moved of its own accord, and said, *Ladies that have intelligence of Love.* These words I laid up in my mind with great joy, thinking to take them for my beginning: wherefore then, having returned to the above-mentioned city, after some days of thought I began a *canzone* with this beginning, arranged in the mode which will be seen below in its division. The *canzone* beginneth thus: —

Ladies that have intelligence of Love,
I of my lady wish with you to speak;
Not that I can believe to end her praise,
But to discourse that I may ease my mind.
I say that when I think upon her worth,
So sweet Love maketh himself feel to me,

That if I then my courage did not lose,
Speaking, I would enamor all mankind.
And I wish not so loftily to speak
As to become, through apprehension, vile.
But of her gentle nature I will treat
In manner light compared with her desert,
Enamored dames and damosels, with you,
For 't is not thing to speak of unto others.
An angel crieth in the mind divine,
And saith: "O Sire, on earth is to be seen
A miracle in action, that proceeds
From out a soul which far as here doth shine.
Heaven, which hath not any other defect
Save want of her, demands her of its Lord,
And every Saint doth for this favor beg."
Only Compassion our part defendeth;
And thus speaks God, who of my lady thinks:
"O my elect, now suffer ye in peace
That, while it pleaseth me, your hope abide
Where dwelleth one who feareth loss of her,
And who shall say in hell to the foredoomed,
'I have beheld the hope of those in bliss.'"
My lady is desired in highest heaven;
Now will I of her virtue make you know.
I say: Whoso would seem a gentle dame
Should go with her; for when she passeth by

Love casts a frost upon all caitiff hearts,
So that their every thought doth freeze and perish.
And what can bear to stay on her to look
Will noble thing become, or else will die.
And when one finds that he may worthy be
To look on her, he doth his virtue prove;
For then that comes to him which gives him health,
And humbleth him till he forgets all wrong.
And God hath given her for greater grace,
That who hath spoke with her cannot end ill.
Love saith concerning her, "How can it be
That mortal thing be thus adorned, and pure?"
Then, gazing on her, to himself he swears
That God in her a new thing means to make.
Color of pearl so clothes her as doth best
Become a lady, nowise in excess.
Whate'er of good Nature can make she is,
And by her pattern beauty tries itself.
From out her eyes, howe'er she moveth them,
Spirits inflamed of love go forth, which strike
The eyes of him who then may look on them,
And enter so that every heart they find.
Love you behold depicted in her smile,
Whereon no one can look with steadfast gaze.
I know, Canzone, thou wilt go to speak
With many ladies, when I send thee forth.

And now I bid thee, having bred thee up
As young and simple daughter unto Love,
That where thou comest thou shouldst praying say,
"Teach me which way to go, for I am sent
To her with praise of whom I am adorned."
And if thou wishest not to go in vain,
Remain not there where villain folk may be.
Endeavor, if thou mayst, to be acquaint
Only with lady or with courteous man,
Who thee shalt guide along the speediest way.
Thou wilt find Love in company with her;
Commend me to them as behooveth thee.

In order that this canzone may be better understood, I shall divide it more elaborately than the preceding poems, and therefore I make of it three parts. The first part is a proem to the words which follow; the second is the subject treated of; the third is, as it were, a handmaid to the words which precede. The second beginneth here: "An angel crieth"; *the third, here:* "I know, Canzone." *The first part is divided into four; in the first, I say to whom I wish to speak of my lady, and wherefore I wish to speak; in the second, I say what she seemeth to myself, when I think upon her worth, and in what wise I would speak if I lost not courage; in the third, I say how*

I think to speak in order that I may not be hindered by faintheartedness; in the fourth, repeating yet once more to whom I intend to speak, I tell the reason why I speak to them. The second beginneth here: "I say"; *the third, here:* "And I wish not"; *the fourth, here:* "Enamored dames." *Then when I say,* "An angel crieth," *I begin to treat of this lady, and this part is divided into two; in the first, I tell what of her is comprehended in heaven; in the second, I tell what of her is comprehended on earth, — here:* "My lady is desired." *This second part is divided into two; for in the first I speak of her in respect of the nobility of her soul, recounting some of the virtues which proceed from her soul; in the second, I speak of her in respect of the nobility of her body, recounting some of her beauties, — here:* "Love saith concerning her." *This second part is divided into two; for in the first I speak of some of the beauties which belong to her whole person; in the second, I speak of some of the beauties which belong to special parts of her person, — here:* "From out her eyes." *This second part is divided into two; for in one I speak of the eyes which are the beginning of Love; in the second, I speak of the mouth which is the end of Love. And in order that every evil thought may be removed hence, let him who readeth*

remember what is written above, that the salutation of this lady, which was an action of her mouth, was the end of my desires so long as I was able to receive it. Then when I say, "I know, Canzone," *I add a stanza, as if for a handmaid to the others, in which I tell what I desire of this my canzone. And since this last part is easy to be understood, I do not trouble myself with more divisions. I say, indeed, that to make the meaning of this canzone more clear, it might be needful to employ more minute divisions; but nevertheless it will not displease me that he who hath not wit enough to understand it by means of those already made should let it alone; for certes I fear I have communicated its meaning to too many even through these divisions which are made, if it should happen that many should hear it.*

XX.

After this *canzone* had been somewhat divulged to the world, inasmuch as one of my friends had heard it, the desire moved him to beg me that I should tell him what Love is, entertaining perhaps through the words he had heard a hope of me beyond my desert. Wherefore I, thinking that after such a treatise it were

beautiful to treat somewhat of Love, and thinking that my friend was to be served, resolved to speak words in which I would treat of Love, and then I devised this sonnet: —

Love is but one thing with the gentle heart,
  As in the saying of the sage we find.
  Thus one from other cannot be apart,
  More than the reason from the reasoning mind.
When Nature amorous becomes, she makes
  Love then her Lord, the heart his dwelling-place,
  Within which, sleeping, his repose he takes,
  Sometimes for brief, sometimes for longer space;
Beauty doth then in modest dame appear
  Which pleaseth so the eyes, that in the heart
  A longing for the pleasing thing hath birth;
And now and then so long it lasteth there,
  It makes Love's spirit wide awake to start:
  The like in lady doth a man of worth.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I speak of him in respect of what he is potentially; in the second, I speak of him as passing from potentiality into act. The second beginneth here: "Beauty doth then." *The first is divided into two; in the first, I tell in what subject this potentiality existeth; in the second, I tell how*

this subject and this potentiality are brought together, and how one is related to the other, as form to matter. The second beginneth here: "When Nature." *Then, when I say,* "Beauty doth then," *I tell how this potentiality passeth into act; and first, how it passeth in man, then, how it passeth in woman,—here:* "The like in lady."

XXI.

After I had treated of Love in the above rhyme, the will came to me to speak further in praise of this most gentle lady words by which I would show how this Love is awakened by her, and how she not only awakeneth him there where he is sleeping, but there where he is not potentially she, marvellously working, causeth him to come; and I devised then this sonnet:—

Within her eyes my lady beareth Love,
  So that whom she regards is gentle made;
  All toward her turn, where'er her path is laid,
  And whom she greets, his heart doth trembling move;
So that with face cast down, all pale to view,
  For every fault of his he then doth sigh;
  Anger and pride away before her fly:—
  Assist me, dames, to pay her honor due.

All sweetness truly, every humble thought,
The heart of him who hears her speak doth hold;
Whence he is blessed who hath seen her erewhile.
What seems she when a little she doth smile
Cannot be kept in mind, cannot be told,
Such strange and gentle miracle is wrought.

This sonnet hath three parts. In the first, I tell how this lady reduceth this potentiality into act, as respects that most noble part, her eyes; and in the third, I tell how this same thing is effected as respects that most noble part, her mouth. And between the first and the third is a little part, which beseeches aid, as it were, for the preceding part, and for the following, and beginneth here: "Assist me, dames." *The third beginneth here:* "All sweetness." *The first is divided into three; for in the first I tell how she with power maketh gentle that which she looketh upon; and this is as much as to say that she bringeth Love potentially there where he is not. In the second, I tell how she bringeth Love into act in the hearts of all those upon whom she looketh. In the third, I tell that which she then effecteth with power in their hearts. The second beginneth,* "All toward"; *the third,* "And whom she greets." *When, afterward, I say,* "Assist me, dames," *I indicate to whom it is my intention to*

speak, calling upon these ladies to aid me to pay her honor. Then, when I say, "All sweetness," *I tell the same thing as hath been said in the first part, according to two acts of her mouth, one of which is her most sweet speech, and the other her marvellous smile, except that I do not tell of this last how it worketh in the hearts of others, because the memory cannot retain it nor its effects.*

XXII.

Not many days after this, it pleased the Lord of Glory, who refused not death for himself, that he who had been the begetter of such a marvel as that most noble Beatrice was seen to be, departing from this life, should go verily unto the eternal glory. Wherefore, inasmuch as such a departure is grievous to those who remain, and have been friends of him who is gone; and there is no friendship so intimate as that of a good father with a good child, and of a good child with a good father; and this lady had been of the highest degree of goodness, and her father, as is believed by many, and it is true, had been good in a high degree, — it is plain that this lady was most bitterly full of grief. And inasmuch as, according

to the custom of the above-mentioned city, women meet with women, and men with men, in such affliction, many ladies assembled where this Beatrice was weeping piteously. Wherefore, seeing certain of them returning from her, I heard them speak of this most gentle lady, how she was bewailing herself. Among their words I heard how they said, "Truly, she so weepeth that whoever should behold her must die of pity." Then these ladies passed on, and I remained in such grief that my tears began to fall, and, often putting my hands before mine eyes, I covered my face. And had it not been that I expected to hear further of her, for I was in a place where most of the ladies who came from her passed by, I should have hidden myself as soon as the tears had assailed me. And while I was still tarrying in the same place, more ladies passed near me, who went along talking together, and saying, "Who of us should ever be joyful, since we have heard this lady speak so piteously?" After these, others passed, who said, as they went by, "This one who is here is weeping neither more nor less than if he had seen her as we have." And then others said of me, "Behold, this man is become such he seemeth not himself." And

thus these ladies passing by, I heard speech of her and of myself after this fashion which hath been told. Wherefore, afterwards musing, I resolved to speak words in verse, seeing that I had fit occasion to speak, in which I would include all that I had heard from these ladies. And since I would willingly have questioned them, had it not been for fear of blame, I treated my theme as if I had questioned them, and they had replied to me. And I made two sonnets; for in the first I question, in the way in which the desire came to me to question; in the other, I tell their answer, taking that which I heard from them as if they had said it in reply to me. And I began the first, "Ye who a semblance"; the second, "Art thou then that one."

Ye who a semblance so dejected bear,
  And who with eyes cast down your trouble show,
  Whence do ye come, that thus your color now
  Appears like that which pity's self doth wear?
Our gentle lady truly have ye seen,
  Her face all bathed in tears of loving woe?
  Tell me, ye ladies; my heart tells me so,
  Since I behold ye going with grave mien.
And if ye come from sight of grief so great,

Be pleased to stay a little here with me,
And hide not from me what may be her state.
For in your eyes such trace of tears I see,
And ye return with such a mournful gait,
That my heart trembles thus to look on ye.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first; I call upon and ask these ladies if they come from her, saying to them that I believe it, because they return as if ennobled. In the second, I pray them to tell me of her; and the second beginneth here: "And if ye come."

Art thou then that one who discourse did hold
Of this our lady oft with us alone?
Thy voice resembleth his indeed in tone,
But thy form seems to us of other mould.
And wherefore weep'st thou so without control,
That thou mak'st others pity feel for thee?
Her lamentations didst thou really see,
So thou canst not conceal thy grieving soul?
Leave tears to us, and let us sadly go,
(He doeth ill who us shall seek to aid,)
For we have heard her speak in midst of woe.
Upon her face such sorrow is displayed,
That who had wished to gaze upon her so,
Before her falling, would in death be laid.

This sonnet hath four parts, according to the four fashions of speech of the ladies for whom I reply. And because these are sufficiently shown above, I do not concern myself to tell the purport of the parts, and therefore I only mark them. The second beginneth here: "And wherefore weep'st thou"; *the third:* "Leave tears to us"; *the fourth:* "Upon her face."

XXIII.

A FEW days after this it fell out that a grievous infirmity came upon me in a certain part of my body, from which I suffered for many days most bitter pain, which brought me unto such weakness that I was forced to lie as one who cannot move. I say that on the ninth day, feeling intolerable pain, a thought came to me the which was of my lady. And when I had thought somewhat of her, I turned to my enfeebled life, and beholding how slight was its duration, even were it sound, I began lamenting within myself for such misery; and, sighing deeply, I said within myself, "It must needs be that the most gentle Beatrice shall at some time die." And thereupon a strong bewilderment so overcame me, that I closed my eyes,

and began to be distracted like a person in a frenzy, and to imagine in this wise: that at the beginning of the wandering which my fancy made certain faces of ladies with hair dishevelled appeared to me, and they said to me, "Thou too shalt die." And after these ladies there appeared to me certain strange faces, and horrible to behold, which said to me, "Thou art dead." Thus my fancy beginning to wander, I was brought to such a pass that I knew not where I was, and it seemed to me that I saw ladies with hair dishevelled go weeping along the way marvellously sad; and it seemed to me that I saw the sun grow dark, so that the stars showed themselves of such a color as to make me deem they wept; and it seemed to me that the birds as they flew fell dead, and that there were very great earthquakes. And in this fantasy, marvelling and much fearing, I imagined that a certain friend came to me to say: "Dost thou not know? Thine admirable lady is departed from this world." Then I began to weep very piteously, and wept not only in my imagination, but wept with mine eyes, bathing them with real tears. I imagined that I looked toward heaven, and it seemed to me that I saw a multitude of angels, who were returning up-

wards, and had before them a little cloud of exceeding whiteness; and it seemed to me that these angels sang gloriously, and the words of their song it seemed to me were these: "*Osanna in excelsis!*"— and aught else meseemed not to hear. Then it seemed to me that the heart wherein was so much love said to me, "True is it that our lady lieth dead." And forthwith it seemed to me that I went to behold the body in which that most noble and blessed soul had dwelt. And so strong was the erring fancy, that it showed to me this lady dead; and it seemed to me that ladies were covering her head with a white veil, and it seemed to me that her face had such an aspect of humility that it seemed to say, "Now do I behold the beginning of peace." In this imagination there came upon me such humility through seeing her, that I called upon Death, and said: "Most sweet Death, come unto me, and be not discourteous to me; for thou oughtest to be gentle, in such place hast thou been. Come then unto me, who greatly desire thee; thou seest that I already wear thy color." And when I had seen all the mournful mysteries completed which are wont to be performed for the bodies of the dead, it seemed to me that I returned to my chamber; and here it seemed to me that I looked

toward heaven, and so strong was my imagination, that, weeping, I began to say with my real voice, "O most beautiful soul, how blessed is he who beholdeth thee!" And saying these words, with a grievous sob of weeping, and calling upon Death to come unto me, a young and gentle lady, who was at the side of my bed, believing that my weeping and my words were lamentation on account of the pain of my infirmity, with great fear began to weep. Wherefore other ladies who were in the chamber became aware that I was weeping, through the tears they saw her shed; wherefore, making her, who was connected with me in the nearest kinship, depart from me, they drew towards me to wake me, believing that I had been dreaming, and said to me, "Sleep no more, nor be discomforted." And speaking to me thus, the strong fantasy ended at that instant when I desired to say, "O Beatrice, blessed be thou!" And I had already said, "O Beatrice," when, arousing myself, I opened my eyes and saw that I was deceived. And notwithstanding I had uttered this name, my voice was so broken by sobs that these ladies had not been able to understand me. And although I was sore ashamed, nevertheless, by some admonition of Love, I turned me to them. And when they saw me, they began to say,

"He seemeth dead"; and to say each to other, "Let us strive to comfort him." Thereupon they said many words to comfort me, and now and then they asked me of what I had been afraid. Wherefore I, being somewhat comforted, and having recognized the falsity of my imagining, replied to them, "I will tell you what hath ailed me." Then, beginning at the beginning, I told them even to the end that which I had seen, keeping silent the name of this most gentle lady. Wherefore afterwards, being healed of this infirmity, I resolved to speak concerning that which had befallen me, since it seemed to me that it would be a thing delightful to hear; and so I devised this *canzone* concerning it:—

A lady, pitiful, and young in years,
Adorned full well with human sympathies,
Was present there where oft I called on Death.
Beholding how my eyes were filled with woe,
And hearing the vain words that fell from me,
She was induced by fear to weep aloud;
And other ladies who were thus made ware
Of me, through her who with me there was weeping,
Made her to go away,
While they drew near to cause me to awake.
One said, "No longer sleep";

Another said, "Why so discomforted?"
Thereon the novel fantasy I left
In giving utterance to my lady's name.
So mournful was my voice, and broken so
By anguish and by tears, that I alone
The name within my heart did understand.
And with the look, all shamëd as it was,
That thus had ta'en possession of my face,
Love did compel me unto them to turn.
And such my color was to look upon,
As made these others to discourse of death.
"Ah! let us comfort him,"
One lady to the other humbly prayed;
And they said oftentimes,
"What hast thou seen that thou no strength hast left?"
And when a little I was comforted,
"Ladies," I said, "I it to you will tell.
While I was thinking of my fragile life,
And saw how slight continuance it hath,
Love wept within my heart where he abides.
By which, indeed, my soul was so dismayed,
That then I sighing said within my thought,
'Sure it must be my lady too shall die.'
Then such bewilderment I fell into,
I closed my eyes that basely were weighed down;
And consternated so

My spirits were, that each went straying off.
And then imagining,
Bereft of consciousness alike and truth,
Ladies with looks of wrath appeared to me,
Who said to me, 'Thou too shalt die, shalt die.'
Then saw I many fearful things within
The false imagining wherein I lay;
Meseemed to be I know not in what place,
And to see ladies pass dishevelled by,
Some weeping and some uttering lamentations,
So that the fire of sadness they shot forth.
Then, as it seemed, I by degrees beheld
The sun grow dark, and then the star appear,
And he and she to weep;
The birds in their mid-flight through air fell down,
And the earth seemed to shake.
And I beheld a man pale-faced and hoarse,
Who said, 'What ails thee? Knowst thou not the news?
Dead is thy lady, she that was so fair.'
I raised my eyes that bathed were with tears,
And saw what seemed to be a rain of manna,—
The Angels who returning were to heaven;
In front of them a little cloud they had,
And, following this, they all 'Hosanna!' cried;
Had they said more, to you I would it tell.
And then Love said, 'No more I hide from thee;

Come and behold our lady where she lies.'
The false imagining
Conducted me to see my lady dead;
And as I looked I saw
That ladies with a veil were covering her;
And she had with her humbleness so true,
It seemed as if she said, 'I am in peace.'
So humble in my sorrow I became,
Seeing in her such humbleness displayed,
That I said: 'Death, thee very sweet I hold;
Thou oughtest now to be a gentle thing,
Since thou within my lady hast abode,
And thou shouldst pity have, and not disdain.
Behold! so eager am I among thine
To be, that I resemble thee in truth.
Come! my heart calleth thee.'
Then I departed, all my grief complete;
And when I was alone,
Looking unto the realm on high, I said,
'Blessed is he who sees thee, beauteous soul!'
You called me thereupon, thanks be to you."

This canzone hath two parts. In the first, I tell, speaking to an undefined person, how I was roused from a vain fantasy by certain ladies, and how I promised them to tell it. In the second, I tell how I told it to them.

The second beginneth here: "While I was thinking." *The first part is divided into two; in the first, I tell that which certain ladies, and that which one alone, said and did on account of my fantasy before I had returned to true consciousness; in the second, I tell that which these ladies said to me after I left this frenzy, and it beginneth here:* "So mournful was my voice." *Then when I say,* "While I was thinking," *I tell how I told them this my imagination, and of this I make two parts. In the first, I tell in order this imagination; in the second, telling at what point they called me, I thank them covertly; and this part beginneth here:* "You called me."

XXIV.

After this vain imagination it came to pass one day that, as I sat thoughtful in a certain place, I felt a trembling begin in my heart, just as if I had been in the presence of this lady. Then I say that an imagination of Love came to me; and it seemed to me that I saw him coming from that place where my lady dwelt; and it seemed to me that he joyfully said to me in my heart, "Take heed that thou bless the day on which I took possession of thee, for thou oughtest so

to do." And of a truth it seemed to me that my heart was so gladsome, that it seemed to me it could not be my heart, because of its new condition. And a little after these words which my heart had said to me with the tongue of Love, I saw coming towards me a gentle lady who was famous for her beauty, and who had now long been the lady of my first friend. And the name of this lady was Joan, but on account of her beauty, as some believe, the name of Primavera had been given to her, and thus she was called. And behind her, as I looked, I beheld coming the marvellous Beatrice. These ladies passed near me thus one after the other; and it seemed to me that Love spoke to me in my heart, and said: "This first is called Primavera solely because of this coming of to-day; for I moved the giver of the name to call her Primavera, that is to say, *prima verrà* [she will come first] on the day that Beatrice shall show herself after the false imagination of her vassal. And if thou wilt consider her original name, it further meaneth the same as Primavera, because her name, Joan, is derived from that John who preceded the true Light, saying, *Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini.*" And also it seemed to me that after these he said to me other words, namely: "He who should

consider subtilely would call that Beatrice *Love*, because of the great likeness she hath to me." Wherefore I, thinking this over, resolved to write of it in rhyme to my first friend, (keeping silent certain words which it seemed should be kept silent,) for I believed that his heart still admired the beauty of this gentle Primavera; and I devised this sonnet: —

An amorous spirit in my heart that lay
  I felt awaken from his slumber there;
  And then I saw Love come from far away,
  But scarce I knew him, for his joyous air.
"Honor to me," he said, "think now to pay,"
  And all his words with smiles companioned were.
  Then did my Lord a little with me stay,
  And on the way whence he appeared whilere
I Lady Joan and Lady Bicë see,
  Approaching toward the place wherein I was;
  One marvel following the other came;
And, as my mind reporteth unto me,
  Love said, "This one is Spring, and this, because
  She so resembleth me, hath Love for name."

This sonnet hath many parts; the first of which telleth how I felt the wonted tremor awake in my heart, and how it seemed that Love appeared to me joyous from afar;

the second telleth how it meseemed that Love spake to me in my heart, and what he seemed to me; the third telleth how, after he had been thus with me for some time, I saw and heard certain things. The second part beginneth here: "Honor to me"; *the third, here:* "Then did my Lord." *The third part is divided into two; in the first, I tell that which I saw; in the second, I tell that which I heard, and it beginneth here:* "Love said."

XXV.

It may be that some person, entitled to have every doubt cleared away, may here be perplexed at my speaking of Love as if it were a thing in itself, and not only a spiritual essence, but as if it were a corporal substance. The which thing, in truth, is false, for Love existeth not in itself as substance, but is an accident in substance. And that I speak of it as if it were a body, and, further, as if it were a man, appeareth from three things that I say of it. I say that I saw it come from far off; wherefore, since *coming* implieth a local motion, and, according to the philosopher, only a body is locally movable in itself, it appeareth that I assume Love to be a body. I say further of it, that it laughed, and also

that it spake, which things appear to be properties of man, especially the faculty of laughing, and thus it appeareth that I assume that it is a man. To explain this matter so far as is meet for the present occasion, it must first be understood that formerly there were no rhymers of Love in the vulgar tongue, but certain poets in the Latin tongue were rhymers of Love; among us, I mean, although perchance among other people it may have happened, and although furthermore, as in Greece, not the vulgar, but the lettered poets treated of these things. And no great number of years have passed since these poets in the vulgar tongue first appeared. For to write in rhyme in the vulgar is, after a manner, the same thing as to write in verse in Latin. And the proof that it is but a short time is, that, if we search in the tongue of the *oco*, and in the tongue of the *sì*, we shall not find anything written more than a hundred and fifty years before the present time. And the reason why some uncultured persons got the fame of knowing how to write is, that they happened to be the first who wrote in the tongue of the *sì*. And the first who began to write as a poet in the vulgar tongue was moved to do so because he wished to make his words intelligible to a lady who could not easily understand Latin verses.

And this is against those who rhyme on any other theme than Love, since this mode of speech was from the beginning invented in order to speak of Love. Wherefore, since a greater license of speech is granted to poets than to writers of prose, and these writers in rhyme are no other than poets using the vulgar tongue, it is fitting and reasonable that greater license of speech should be permitted to them than to the other writers in the vulgar tongue; so that, if any figure or rhetorical coloring is allowed to poets, it is allowed also to the rhymers. Therefore, if we see that the poets have spoken of inanimate things as if they had sense and reason, and have made them speak together, and not only real things, but also things not real, (that is, that they have said of things which have no existence that they spake, and have often made accidents speak as if they were substances and human,) it is fitting that the writer in rhyme should do the like, not without any reason, but with a reason which it may be possible afterwards to explain in prose.

That the poets have thus spoken as hath been said appeareth from Virgil, who saith that Juno, that is, a goddess hostile to the Trojans, spake to Æolus, lord of the winds, here in the first of the Æneid: *Æole, namque tibi, etc.;* and that this lord replied to her here: *Tuus,*

O regina, quid optes, etc. In this same poet the inanimate thing speaketh to the animate thing, in the third of the Æneid, here: *Dardanidæ duri, etc.* In Lucan the animate thing speaketh to the inanimate, here: *Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis.* In Horace a man speaketh to his own knowledge as to another person; and not only are they the words of Horace, but he speaketh them as the interpreter of the good Homer, here in his book on Poetry: *Dic mihi, Musa, virum, etc.* In Ovid, Love speaketh as if he were a human person, in the beginning of the book of the Remedy for Love, here: *Bella mihi video, bella parantur, ait.*

And by this the matter may now be clear to any one who is perplexed in any part of this my little book. And in order that no uncultured person may derive any confidence therefrom, I say, that the poets do not speak thus without reason, and that those who rhyme ought not to speak thus, unless they have some reason for what they say; since it would be a great disgrace to him who should rhyme anything under the garb of a figure or of rhetorical coloring, if afterward, being asked, he should not be able to denude his words of this garb, in such wise that they should have a true meaning. And my first friend and I are well acquainted with those who rhyme thus foolishly.

XXVI.

THIS most gentle lady, of whom there hath been discourse in the preceding words, came into such favor among the people, that, when she passed along the way, persons ran to see her, which gave me wonderful delight. And when she was near any one, such modesty came into his heart that he dared not raise his eyes, or return her salutation; and of this many, as having experienced it, could bear witness for me, to whoso might not believe it. She, crowned and clothed with humility, took her way, displaying no pride in that which she saw and heard. Many said, when she had passed, "This is not a woman; rather she is one of the most beautiful angels of heaven." And others said, "She is a marvel. Blessed be the Lord who can work thus admirably!" I say that she showed herself so gentle and so full of all pleasantness that those who looked upon her comprehended in themselves a pure and sweet delight, such as they could not after tell in words; nor was there any who might look upon her but that he needs must sigh at the beginning. These and more admirable things proceeded from her admirably and with power. Wherefore I, thinking upon this, desiring to resume the style

of her praise, resolved to say words in which I would set forth her admirable and excellent influences, to the end that not only those who might actually behold her, but also others, might know of her whatever words could tell. Then I devised this sonnet:—

So gentle and so modest doth appear
My lady when she giveth her salute,
That every tongue becometh, trembling, mute;
Nor do the eyes to look upon her dare.
Although she hears her praises, she doth go
Benignly vested with humility;
And like a thing come down, she seems to be,
From heaven to earth, a miracle to show.
So pleaseth she whoever cometh nigh,
She gives the heart a sweetness through the eyes,
Which none can understand who doth not prove.
And from her countenance there seems to move
A spirit sweet and in Love's very guise,
Who to the soul is ever saying, Sigh!

This sonnet is so easy of understanding, through that which hath been narrated, that it hath no need of any division, and therefore, leaving it,

XXVII.

I SAY that this my lady reached such favor that not only was she honored and praised, but through her were many ladies honored and praised. Wherefore I, seeing this, and wishing to manifest it to whoever saw it not, resolved further to say words in which this should be set forth; and I devised this sonnet, which relateth how her virtue wrought in other ladies: —

All welfare hath he perfectly beheld
  Who amid ladies doth my lady see;
  And whoso goeth with her is compelled
  Grateful to God for this fair grace to be.
Her beauty of such virtue is indeed,
  That ne'er in others doth it envy move;
  Rather she makes them like her to proceed,
  Clothed on with gentleness and faith and love.
Her sight creates in all humility,
  And maketh not herself to please alone,
  But each gains honor who to her is nigh.
So gentle in her every act is she,
  That she can be recalled to mind by none
  Who doth not, in Love's very sweetness, sigh.

This sonnet hath three parts: in the first, I say among what people this lady appeared most admirable; in the second, I say how gracious was her company; in the third, I speak of those things which she wrought with power in others. The second beginneth here: "And whoso goeth"; *the third, here:* "Her beauty of such virtue." *This last part is divided into three: in the first, I tell that which she wrought in ladies, namely, as regards themselves; in the second, I tell that which she wrought in them in respect to others; in the third, I tell how she wrought not only in ladies, but in all persons, and how she marvellously wrought not only in presence, but also in memory. The second beginneth here:* "Her sight"; *the third, here:* "So gentle."

XXVIII.

After this I began to think one day upon what I had said of my lady, that is in the two preceding sonnets, and seeing in my thought that I had not spoken of that which at the present time she wrought in me, it seemed to me that I had spoken defectively; and therefore I resolved to say words in which I would tell how I seemed to myself to be disposed to her influence, and how her virtue wrought in me; and not

believing that I could relate this in the brevity of a sonnet, I began then a *canzone* which beginneth: —

So long hath Love retained me at his hest,
And to his sway hath so accustomed me,
That as at first he cruel used to be,
So in my heart he now doth sweetly rest.
Thus when by him my strength is dispossessed,
So that the spirits seem away to flee,
My frail soul feels such sweetness verily,
That with it pallor doth my face invest.
Then Love in me doth with such power prevail,
He makes my sighs in words to take their way;
And they go forth to pray
My lady that she give me greater hale.
Where'er she sees me, this to me occurs;
Nor can it be believed what humbleness is hers.

XXIX.

Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium.

I was yet full of the design of this *canzone*, and had completed the above-written stanza thereof, when the Lord of Justice called this most gentle one to glory,

under the banner of that holy Queen Mary, whose name was ever spoken with greatest reverence by this blessed Beatrice.

And although perchance it might be pleasing, were I now to treat somewhat of her departure from us, it is not my intention to treat of it here for three reasons. The first is, that it is no part of the present design, if we consider the proem which precedes this little book. The second is, that, supposing it did belong to the present design, still my pen would not be sufficient to treat thereof as were meet. The third is, that, supposing both the one and the other, it were not becoming in me to treat thereof, since, in so doing, it would be needful for me to praise myself, — a thing altogether blameworthy in whosoever doeth it, — and therefore I leave this theme to some other interpreter.

Nevertheless, since the number nine hath often found place among the preceding words, which it would seem could not be without some reason, and in her departure this number seemeth to have occupied a large place, it is befitting to say something on this point, seeing that it seemeth to befit my design. Wherefore I will first tell how it had place in her departure, and then I will assign some reason wherefore this number was so friendly to her.

XXX.

I SAY that, according to the mode of reckoning in Italy, her most noble soul departed in the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and, according to the reckoning in Syria, she departed in the ninth month of the year, since the first month there is Tismin, which with us is October. And according to our reckoning, she departed in that year of our indiction, that is, of the years of the Lord, in which the perfect number was completed for the ninth time in that century in which she had been set in this world; and she was of the Christians of the thirteenth century. One reason why this number was so friendly to her may be this: since, according to Ptolemy and according to the Christian truth, there are nine heavens which move, and, according to the common astrological opinion, the said heavens work effects here below according to their conjunctions, this number was her friend to the end that it might be understood that at her generation all the nine movable heavens were in most perfect conjunction. This is one reason thereof; but considering more subtilely and according to the infallible truth, this number was she herself, I mean by similitude, and I intend it

thus. The number three is the root of nine, for, without any other number, multiplied by itself it maketh nine, as we see plainly that three times three make nine. Therefore, since three is the factor by itself of nine, and the Author of miracles by himself is three, namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three and one, this lady was accompanied by the number nine, that it might be understood that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, whose only root is the marvellous Trinity. Perchance even a more subtile reason might be seen therein by a more subtile person, but this is that which I see for it, and which best pleaseth me.

XXXI.

After this most gentle lady had departed from this world, all the above-mentioned city remained as if widowed and despoiled of every dignity, wherefore I, still weeping in this desolate city, wrote to the princes of the earth somewhat of its condition, taking that beginning of Jeremiah, *Quomodo sedet sola civitas!* And this I tell in order that others may not wonder why I have cited it above, as if for an entrance to the new matter that cometh after. And if any one should choose

to blame me in that I do not write here the words which follow those cited, my excuse is, that from the first it was my design to write nothing except in the vulgar tongue; wherefore, since the words which follow those cited were all Latin, it would be contrary to my design if I should write them; and I know that this my friend for whom I write this had a similar understanding, namely, that I should write to him only in the vulgar tongue.

XXXII.

After mine eyes had wept for some time, and were so wearied that I could not give vent to my sadness, I thought to try to give vent to it with some words of grief; and therefore I resolved to make a *canzone*, in which, lamenting, I would hold discourse of her for whom such grief was wasting my soul; and I began then, "*The eyes that grieve*," etc.

In order that this canzone may seem to remain the more a widow after its end, I will divide it before I write it out; and this mode I shall follow henceforth. I say that this poor little canzone hath three parts: the first is the proem; in the second, I discourse of her; in the third, I speak pitifully to the canzone. The second beginneth here: "To

the high heaven"; *the third, here:* "Sad song of mine." *The first is divided into three: in the first, I tell wherefore I am moved to speak; in the second, I tell to whom I wish to speak; in the third, I tell of whom I wish to speak. The second beginneth here:* "And since I do remember." *The third, here:* "And then, lamenting." *Then when I say,* "To the high heaven hath Beatrice gone," *I discourse of her; and of this I make two parts. First, I tell the reason wherefore she was taken from us; then I tell how others mourn her departure; and this part beginneth here:* "Departed from." *This part is divided into three: in the first, I tell who doth not mourn for her; in the second, I tell who mourneth for her; in the third, I tell of mine own condition. The second beginneth here:* "But he hath grief and woe"; *the third,* "Great anguish." *Then when I say,* "Sad song of mine," *I speak to this my canzone, pointing out to it the ladies to whom it should go, and with whom it should stay.*

The eyes that grieve with pity for the heart
Have of their weeping borne the penalty,
So that they now remain as if subdued.
Wherefore if I would to the grief give vent,
Which by degrees conducts me unto death,
Lamenting it behoveth me to speak.

And since I do remember that I spoke
Of her, my lady, while she was alive,
Ye gentle ladies! willingly with you
I will not speak of her,
Save only to a lady's gentle heart.
And I will tell of her lamenting then,
How that to heaven she suddenly hath gone,
And hath left Love behind in grief with me.

Unto the high heaven hath Beatrice gone,
Unto that realm where peace the angels have,
And dwells with them; you, ladies, hath she left.
No quality of cold 't was took her there,
Nor yet of heat, such as affecteth others,
But 't was her great benignity alone.
For that the light of her humility
Passed through the heavens with so great a power
It made to marvel the Eternal Lord:
So that a sweet desire
Upon Him came to summon such salvation;
And He made her come to him from below,
Because He saw that this distressful life
Unworthy was of such a gentle thing.

Departed from her person beautiful
The gentle soul replete with every grace,
And dwelleth glorious in a fit abode;
Who weeps her not when he doth speak of her

Hath heart of stone so vile and so perverse
Spirit benign can never enter there.
Nor is there villain heart with wit so high
It can imagine aught concerning her;
Wherefore to it there comes no wish to weep.
But he hath grief and woe,
With sighing and with weeping unto death,
And of all comfort is his soul bereft,
Who sometimes in his thought considereth
That which she was, and how from us she is ta'en.
Great anguish do my sighs give unto me,
Whene'er my thought unto my heavy mind
Brings to me her who hath my heart divided;
And thinking oftentimes concerning death,
There comes to me so sweet desire therefor
That it transmutes the color in my face.
When this imagination holds me fixed,
Such pain assaileth me on every side,
That then I tremble with the woe I feel;
And such I do become
That from the people shame disparteth me:
Then, weeping, all alone, in my lament
I call on Beatrice, saying, "Art thou dead!"
And while I call on her she comforts me.
The tears of grief, the sighs of agony,
Lay waste my heart whene'er I am alone,

So that whoe'er might see would sorrow feel.
And what indeed my life hath been since she,
My lady, to the new world went away,
No tongue there is that could know how to tell.
And therefore, ladies mine, e'en though I wished,
I could not tell you sooth that which I am.
To me this crabbed life such travail brings,
And it is so abased,
That every man who sees my deathlike look
Appears to me to say, "I cast thee off."
But what I am that doth my lady see,
And thereof I yet hope reward from her.
Sad song of mine, now weeping go thy way,
To find again the dames and damosels
To whom thy sisters all
Were wont to be the bearers of delight;
And thou who art the daughter of despair,
Go forth disconsolate to dwell with them.

XXXIII.

After this *canzone* was composed, there came to me one who, according to the degrees of friendship, was my friend next in order after the first; and he was so near in blood to this lady in glory that there was none nearer. And talking with me, he prayed me to

write for him something on a lady who was dead; and he dissembled his words, so that it might seem that he was speaking of another lady who had lately died; but I, aware that he spake only of that blessed one, told him I would do that which his prayer begged of me. Wherefore I, then thinking thereupon, resolved to make a sonnet in which I would somewhat bewail myself, and to give it to this my friend, that it might seem that I had made it for him, and I devised then, "*To hearken now,*" etc.

This sonnet hath two parts: in the first, I call upon the liegemen of Love to hearken to me; in the second, I tell of my wretched condition. The second beginneth here: "Sighs which their way."

To hearken now unto my sighs come ye,
  O gentle hearts! for pity wills it so, —
  Sighs which their way disconsolately go,
  And were they not, I dead of grief should be:
Because my eyes would debtors be to me
  For vastly more than they could ever pay, —
  To weep, alas! my lady in such way,
  That through their tears my heart relieved might be.
And oftentimes their outcry you shall hear
  To her, my gentle lady, who is gone
  Unto the world deserving of her worth.

And sometimes scorning this life they make moan,
As though the grieving soul itself they were,
Abandoned by its welfare upon earth.

XXXIV.

After I had devised this sonnet, reflecting who he was to whom I intended to give it as if made for him, I saw that the service appeared to me poor and bare for a person so near akin to this lady in glory. And therefore, before I gave him the above-written sonnet, I composed two stanzas of a *canzone*, the one really for him, and the other for me; although both the one and the other may appear to him who doth not regard subtilely as if written for one person. But he who looketh at them subtilely seeth well that different persons speak; in that one doth not call her his lady, and the other doth so, as manifestly appeareth. This *canzone* and this sonnet I gave to him, saying that I had made them for him alone.

The canzone beginneth, "As often as," *and hath two parts. In one, that is, in the first stanza, this my dear friend, her kinsman, bewaileth himself; in the other, I bewail myself, that is, in the second stanza, which beginneth,*

"And there is intermingled." *And thus it appeareth that in this canzone two persons bewail themselves, one of whom bewaileth himself as a brother, the other as a vassal.*

As often as, alas! I call to mind
That I may nevermore
The lady see for whom thus sad I go,
My grieving mind doth cause so great a grief
To gather round my heart,
I say, "My soul, why goest thou not away,
Seeing the torments thou wilt have to bear
In this world so molestful now to thee
Make me foreboding with a heavy fear?"
And therefore upon Death
I call, as to my sweet and soft repose,
And say, "Come thou to me," with such desire
That I am envious of whoever dies.
And there is intermingled with my sighs
A sound of wofulness
Which evermore is calling upon Death.
And unto her turned all of my desires
When that this lady mine
Was overtaken by her cruelty;
Whereby the pleasure of her beauteousness,
Taking itself away from out our sight,
Became a spiritual beauty great,

Which spreads abroad through heaven
A light of love that doth the angels greet,
And makes their high and keen intelligence
To marvel, of such gentleness is she.

XXXV.

On that day on which the year was complete since this lady was made one of the denizens of life eternal, I was seated in a place where, having her in mind, I was drawing an angel upon certain tablets. And while I was drawing it, I turned mine eyes and saw at my side men to whom it was meet to do honor. They were looking on what I did, and, as was afterwards told me, they had been there already some time before I became aware of it. When I saw them I rose, and, saluting them, said, "Another was just now with me, and on that account I was in thought." And when they had gone away, I returned unto my work, namely, that of drawing figures of angels; and while doing this a thought came to me of saying words in rhyme, as if for an anniversary poem of her, and of addressing those persons who had come to me. And I devised then this sonnet that beginneth, "*The gentle lady*," the which hath

two beginnings, and therefore I will divide it according to one and the other.

I say that, according to the first, this sonnet hath three parts: in the first, I say that this lady was already in my memory; in the second, I tell what Love thereupon did to me; in the third, I tell of the effects of Love. The second beginneth here: "Love, who"; *the third, here:* "Lamenting they from out." *This part is divided into two: in the one, I say that all my sighs went forth speaking; in the other, I tell how some said certain words different from the others. The second beginneth here:* "But those." *In this same way it is divided according to the other beginning, except that in the first part I tell when this lady had so come to my mind, and this I do not tell in the other.*

First Beginning.

The gentle lady to my mind had come,
Who, for the sake of her exceeding worth,
Had by the Lord Most High been ta'en from earth
To that calm heaven where Mary hath her home.

Second Beginning.

That gentle lady to my mind in thought
Had come, for sake of whom Love weepeth still,

Just at the time when by his powerful will
To see what I was doing you were brought.
Love, who within my mind did her perceive,
Roused himself up within my wasted heart,
And said unto my sighs, "Go forth! depart!"
Whereon each one in sorrow took its leave.
Lamenting they from out my breast did go,
And uttering a voice that often led
The grievous tears unto my saddened eyes;
But those which issued with the greatest woe,
"O high intelligence!" they, going, said,
"To-day makes up the year since thou to heaven didst rise."

XXXVI.

Some time afterwards, happening to be in a place where I was reminded of the past time, I stood deep in thought, and with such doleful thoughts that they made me exhibit an appearance of terrible distress. Wherefore I, becoming aware of my woe-begone look, lifted up mine eyes to see if any one saw me; and I saw a gentle lady, young and very beautiful, who was looking at me from a window with a face full of compassion, so that all pity seemed assembled in her. Wherefore, since the wretched, when they witness the

compassion of others for them, are the more readily moved to weep, as if they took pity on themselves, I then felt mine eyes begin to desire to weep; and therefore, fearing lest I might display my abject life, I departed from before the eyes of this gentle one; and I said then within me, "It cannot be but that most noble love abideth with this compassionate lady." And therefore I resolved to devise a sonnet in which I would speak to her, and would include all that is narrated in this account. And since this account is manifest enough, I will not divide it.

Mine eyes beheld how you were wont to show
  Great pity on your face, what time your sight
  Fell on the actions and the wretched plight
  To which I ofttimes was reduced by woe.
Then was I ware that you did meditate
  Upon the nature of my darkened years,
  So that within my heart were wakened fears
  Lest that mine eyes should show my low estate.
And then I took myself from you, perceiving
  That tears from out my heart began to move,
  Which by your look had been thus deeply stirred.
Thereon in my sad soul I said this word:
  "Ah! surely with that lady is that Love
  Which maketh me to go about thus grieving."

XXXVII.

It came to pass afterwards that, wherever this lady saw me, she became of a compassionate aspect and of a pallid color, as if that of love; wherefore I was oftentimes reminded of my most noble lady, who had showed herself to me of a like color. And ofttimes, in truth not being able to weep, nor to give vent to my sadness, I sought to see this compassionate lady, who seemed to draw the tears out from mine eyes by her look. And therefore the will furthermore came to me to say certain words, speaking to her; and I devised this sonnet which beginneth, "*Color of Love,*" and which is plain without division, through the preceding account.

Color of Love and semblance of compassion
  Never so wondrously possession took
  Of lady's face, through turning oft her look
  On gentle eyes and grievous lamentation,
As heretofore of yours they have, whene'er
  You saw my countenance with grief o'erwrought;
  So that through you comes something to my thought
  Which, lest it break my heart, I greatly fear.
I have no power to keep my wasted eyes
  From looking oft on you, with the desire
  That gaineth them to let their tears o'erflow.

And you increase their wish in such a wise
That with the longing they are all on fire,
But how to weep before you do not know.

XXXVIII.

I WAS brought to such a pass by the sight of this lady, that mine eyes began to delight too much in seeing her, whereat I was often angry with myself, and esteemed myself mean enough. And many a time I cursed the vanity of mine eyes, and said to them in my thought: "But late you were wont to make those weep who saw your sad condition, and now it seemeth that you wish to forget it by reason of this lady who looketh upon you, and who doth not look upon you save as she grieveth for the lady in glory for whom you are wont to weep. But whatever you are able to do, do; for I will remind you very often of her, accursed eyes; for never, except after death, ought your tears to be stayed." And when I had thus spoken within me unto mine eyes, very deep and distressful sighs assailed me. And in order that this battle which I had with myself might not remain known only to the wretched one who experienced it, I resolved to

make a sonnet, and to include in it this horrible condition; and I devised this which beginneth, "*The bitter tears.*"

The sonnet hath two parts: in the first, I speak to mine eyes as my heart spake within me; in the second, I remove a difficulty, showing who it is that thus speaketh; and this part beginneth here: "Thus saith." *It might indeed receive still further divisions, but this would be needless, since it is clear by reason of the preceding account.*

The bitter tears that shed by you have been,
  Ye eyes of mine! so long a season now,
  Have made the tears of other folk to flow,
  Out of compassion, as yourselves have seen.
That you would this forget, it now appears,
  If on my part I such a wretch should be
  As to disturb you not continually
  With thought of her to whom belong your tears.
Your vanity doth care in me beget,
  And so alarms me that I greatly dread
  Sight of a dame who on you turns her eyes.
Never should you, until that you be dead,
  Our gentle lady who is dead forget:
  Thus saith my heart, and thereupon it sighs.

XXXIX.

THE sight of this lady brought me into so strange a condition, that many a time I thought of her as of a person who pleased me too much. And I thought of her thus: "This is a gentle, beautiful, young, and discreet lady, and she has appeared perchance through the will of Love, in order that my life may find repose." And oftentimes I thought more lovingly, so that my heart consented thereto, that is, unto my reasoning. And when it had thus consented, I took thought again, as if moved by the reason, and said within me: "Ah! what thought is this that in so vile a way seeketh to console me, and scarce leaveth me any other thought?" Then another thought rose up and said: "Now that thou hast been in so great tribulation of Love, why wilt thou not withdraw thyself from such bitterness? Thou seest that this is an inspiration that setteth the desires of Love before us, and proceedeth from a place no less gentle than the eyes of the lady who hath shown herself so pitiful unto thee." Wherefore I, having thus ofttimes been at strife within me, wished anew to say some words thereof; and since in the battle of the thoughts those had conquered that

spake on her behalf, it seemed to me befitting to address her, and I devised this sonnet which beginneth, "*A gentle thought*"; and I said *gentle* inasmuch as I was speaking to a gentle lady, but otherwise it was most vile.

In this sonnet I make two parts of myself, according as my thoughts had twofold division. The one part I call the heart, *that is, the appetite; the other,* the soul, *that is, the reason; and I tell how one spake to the other. And that it is fitting to call the appetite the heart, and the reason the soul, is sufficiently plain to those to whom it pleaseth me that this should be disclosed. It is true that in the preceding sonnet I take the part of the heart in opposition to the eyes, and this seemeth contrary to that which I say in the present; and therefore I say that even there by the heart I mean the appetite, since my desire to remember my most gentle lady was still greater than to see this one, although I had had truly some appetite therefor, but it would seem slight; wherefore it appeareth that the one proposition is not contrary to the other.*

This sonnet hath three parts: in the first, I begin with saying to this lady how my desire turneth wholly toward her; in the second, I say how the soul, that is, the reason, speaketh to the heart, that is, to the appetite; in the third, I say

how it replieth. The second beginneth here: "Who then is this?" *the third, here:* "O saddened soul!"

A gentle thought that of you holds discourse
  Cometh now frequently with me to dwell,
  And in so sweet a way of Love doth tell,
  My heart to yield unto him it doth force.
"Who then is this?" the soul saith to the heart,
  "Who cometh to bring comfort to our mind,
  Possessed of virtue of so potent kind,
  All other thoughts he maketh to depart?"
"O saddened soul," the heart to her replies,
  "This is a little spirit fresh from Love,
  And to my presence his desires he brings.
His very life and all his influence move
  From out of the compassionating eyes
  Of her so troubled by our sufferings."

XL.

AGAINST this adversary of the reason there arose one day about the hour of *nones* a strong imagination within me. For I seemed to see this glorified Beatrice in those crimson garments in which she had first appeared unto mine eyes, and she seemed to me young, of the same

age as when I first saw her. Then I began to think of her; and calling to mind the past time in its order, my heart began bitterly to repent of the desire by which it had so vilely allowed itself for some days to be possessed, contrary to the constancy of the reason. And this so wicked desire being expelled, all my thoughts returned to their most gentle Beatrice. And I say that thenceforth I began to think of her with my heart so all ashamed, that my sighs manifested this oftentimes; for almost all of them told, as they went forth, that which was discoursed of in my heart, to wit, the name of that most gentle one, and how she had departed from us. And many times it came to pass, that some one thought had such anguish in itself that I forgot it and the place where I was. By this rekindling of sighs my tears which had been assuaged were rekindled in such wise that mine eyes seemed two things that desired only to weep; and often it happened that through the long continuance of weeping there came a purple color around them, such as is wont to appear after any torment that one may endure; whence it seemeth that they were worthily rewarded for their vanity, so that from that time forward they could gaze at no one who might look at them so as

it might draw them to a like intention. Wherefore I, wishing that this wicked desire and vain temptation should seem to be destroyed, so that the rhymed words which I had before written should give rise to no question, resolved to make a sonnet in which I would include the purport of this account. And I said then, "*Alas! by force.*"

I said "Alas!" *inasmuch as I was ashamed that mine eyes had so gone astray after vanity. I do not divide this sonnet, for its meaning is sufficiently clear.*

Alas! by force of sighs that oft return,
  Springing from thoughts which are within my heart,
  Mine eyes are conquered, and have lost the art
  To look at one whose gaze on them may turn.
And they are such, they two desires appear,
  Only to weep, and sorrow to display;
  And ofttimes they lament in such a way
  That Love gives them the martyr's crown to wear.
These thoughts and sighs that issue with my breath,
  Become within my heart so full of pain
  That Love, o'ercome with grief, falls senseless there.
For on themselves these grieving ones do bear
  That sweet name of my lady written plain,
  And many words relating to her death.

XLI.

After this tribulation it came to pass, at that time when many people were going to see the blessed image which Jesus Christ left to us as the likeness of his most beautiful countenance, which my lady in glory now beholdeth, that certain pilgrims were passing through a street which is near the middle of that city where the most gentle lady was born, lived, and died; and they were going along, as it seemed to me, very pensive. Wherefore I, thinking on them, said within myself: "These seem to me pilgrims from some far-off region, and I do not believe that they have even heard speak of this lady, and they know nothing of her; nay, their thoughts are rather of other things than of this one here; for perchance they are thinking of their distant friends whom we do not know." Then I said within me: "I know that, if these were from a neighboring country, they would show some sign of trouble as they pass through the midst of the grieving city." Then again I said within me: "If I could hold them awhile, I would indeed make them weep before they should go out from this city; since I would say to them words which would make to weep whoever should hear them."

Wherefore, they having passed out of my sight, I resolved to make a sonnet in which I would set forth that which I had said within me; and in order that it might appear more piteous, I resolved to say it as if I had spoken to them, and I devised this sonnet which beginneth, "*O pilgrims.*"

I said pilgrims *in the wide sense of the word: for pilgrims may be understood in two senses, in one wide and in one narrow. In the wide, forasmuch as every one is a pilgrim who is away from his native land; in the narrow sense, by pilgrim is meant only he who goeth to or returneth from the House of St. James. And further it is to be known that those who journey for the service of the Most High are called by three distinct terms. Those who go beyond the sea, whence often they bring back the palm, are called* palmers. *Those who go to the House of Galicia are called* pilgrims, *because the burial-place of St. James was more distant from his country than that of any other of the Apostles. And those are called* romers, *who go to Rome, where these whom I call* pilgrims *were going. This sonnet is not divided, because it sufficiently declares its own meaning.*

O pilgrims, who in pensive mood move slow,
Thinking perchance of those who absent are,

Say, do ye come from folk away so far
As your appearance seems to us to show?
For ye weep not the while ye forward go
Along the middle of the mourning town;
Seeming as persons who have nothing known
Concerning the sad burden of her woe.
If through your will to hear your steps ye stay,
Truly my heart with sighs declares to me
That ye shall afterwards depart in tears.
Alas! her Beatrice now lost hath she,
And all the words that one of her may say
Have virtue to make weep whoever hears.

XLII.

After this two gentle ladies sent to ask me to send to them some of these rhymed words of mine; wherefore I, thinking on their nobleness, resolved to send to them, and to make a new thing which I would send to them with these, in order that I might fulfil their prayers with the more honor. And I devised then a sonnet which relateth my condition, and I sent it to them accompanied by the preceding sonnet, and with another which beginneth, "*To hearken now.*" The sonnet which I made then is, "*Beyond the sphere,*" etc.

This sonnet hath five parts. In the first, I say where my thought goeth, naming the place with the name of one of its effects. In the second, I say wherefore it goeth upward, and who maketh it thus to go. In the third, I say what it seeth, namely, a lady in honor. And I call it then a pilgrim spirit; *since spiritually it goeth upward, and as a pilgrim who is out of his known country. In the fourth, I say how he seeth her such, that is, of such quality, that I cannot understand it; that is to say, that my thought riseth into the quality of her to a degree that my understanding cannot comprehend it, since our understanding is in regard to those blessed souls as weak as our eye is before the sun; and this the Philosopher sayeth in the second book of his Metaphysics. In the fifth, I say that, although I cannot see whither my thought transports me, namely, her marvellous quality, at least I understand this, namely, that my thought, such as it is, is of my lady, for I often hear her name in my thought. And at the end of this fifth part I say,* "Ladies dear," *to indicate that it is to ladies that I speak. The second part beginneth,* "A new intelligence"; *the third,* "When at"; *the fourth,* "He sees her such"; *the fifth,* "He speaketh of that gentle one." *It might be divided still more subtly, and its meaning be more fully set forth, but it can pass*

with this division, and therefore I do not concern myself to divide it further.

Beyond the sphere that widest orbit hath
  Passeth the sigh that issues from my heart;
  A new intelligence Love doth impart
  In tears to him which leads him on his path.
When at the wished for place his flight he stays,
  A lady he beholds in honor dight,
  Who so doth shine that through her splendid light
  The pilgrim spirit upon her doth gaze.
He sees her such that his reporting words
  To me are dark, so subtly speaketh he
  Unto the grieving heart which makes him tell.
He speaketh of that gentle one to me
  I know, since oft he Beatrice records;
  Thus, ladies dear, I understand him well.

XLIII.

After this sonnet, a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things which made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one, until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain to this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knoweth. So

that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live that my life shall be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman. And then may it please Him who is the Lord of Grace, that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that blessed Beatrice, who in glory looketh upon the face of Him *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus.*

ESSAYS AND NOTES.

N.D. Alve

ESSAYS.

ON THE NEW LIFE.

I.

"At that season," says Boccaccio in his Life of Dante, "when the sweetness of heaven reclothes the earth with its adornments, and makes it all smiling with the variety of flowers among the green leaves, it was the custom in our city for the men and for the ladies to keep holiday in their wards all together, or in separate companies. And so it happened, that, among the rest, Folco Portinari, a man held in much honor in those times among the citizens, had gathered his neighbors at a feast in his own house on the first of May. Among them was the before-named Alighieri,—and, as little boys are wont to follow their fathers, especially to festive places, Dante, whose ninth year was not yet finished, accompanied him. And here, with others of his age, of whom, both boys and girls, there were many at the house of the entertainer, the first tables having been served, he boyishly gave himself to merry-making, at such sports as were suitable to his tender years. Among the children was a little daughter of Folco, whose name was Bice, — that is, so she was called from her primitive name, Beatrice. She was, perhaps, eight years old, a pretty little thing in her girlish way, very ladylike and pleasing in her actions, and much more sedate in her manners and modest in her words than her years required. Beside this, she had very delicate features, admirably proportioned, and full, in addition to their beauty, of such dignity and charm, that she was looked upon by many as a little angel. She then, such as I depict her, or perchance far more beautiful, appeared at this feast before the eyes of our Dante, not, I believe, for the first time, but first with power to enamor him. And although still a child, he received her image into his heart with such affection, that, from that day forward, never so long as he lived did it depart therefrom."

It was partly from tradition, partly from the record which Dante himself had left of it, that Boccaccio drew his account of this scene. In the *Vita Nuova*,—The New Life,—Dante has written the first part of the history of that love which began at this festival,

and which, growing with his growth, became, not many years after, the controlling passion of his life. The love which lasted from his boyhood to his death, keeping his heart fresh, spite of the scorchings of disappointment, with springs of perpetual solace, — the love, which, purified and spiritualized by the bitterness of separation and trial, led him through the hard paths of Philosophy and up the steep ascents of Faith, bringing him out of Hell and through Purgatory to the glories of Paradise and the fulfilment of Hope, — such a love was not only a spiritual experience, but it was also a discipline of character whose results were exhibited in the continually renewed struggles and progressive achievements of life.

The earthly story of this love — its beginning, its irregular course, its hopes and doubts, its exaltations and despairs, its sudden interruption and transformation by death — is the story which the *Vita Nuova* tells. The narrative is quaint, embroidered with conceits, deficient in artistic completeness, but it has the *naïveté* and simplicity of youth, the charm of sincerity, the freedom of personal confidence; and so long as there are lovers in the world, and so long as lovers are poets, so long will this first and tenderest love-story of modern literature be read with appreciation and responsive sympathy.

But *The New Life* has an interest of another sort, and a claim upon all who would read the *Divine Comedy* with fit appreciation, in that it contains the first hint of the great poem itself, and furnishes for it a special, interior, imaginative introduction, without which it is not thoroughly to be understood. The character of Beatrice, as she appears in the *Divine Comedy*, the relation in which the poet stands to her, the motive of the dedication of the poem to her honor and memory, and many minor allusions, are all explained or illustrated by the aid of the *Vita Nuova*.

The *Vita Nuova* is the earliest of Dante's writings, and the most autobiographic of them in form and intention. In it we are brought into intimate personal relations with the poet. He trusts himself to us with full and free confidence; but there is no derogation from becoming manliness in his confessions. He draws the picture of a portion of his youth, and lays bare its tenderest emotions; but he does so with no morbid self-consciousness, and with no affectation. Part of this simplicity is due, undoubtedly, to the character of the times, part to his own youthfulness, part to downright faith in his own genius. It was the fashion for poets to tell of their loves; in following this fashion, he not only gave expression to genuine feeling, and claimed his rank among the poets, but also fixed a standard by which the ideal expression of love was thereafter to be measured.

This first essay of his poetic powers rests on the foundation upon which his later life was built. The figure of Beatrice, which appears veiled under the allegory, and indistinct in the bright

cloud of the mysticism of the *Divina Commedia*, takes her place in life and on the earth through the *Vita Nuova* as definitely as Dante himself. She is no allegorized piece of humanity, no impersonation of attributes, but an actual woman, — beautiful, modest, gentle, with companions only less beautiful than herself, — the most delightful figure in the midst of the picturesque life of Florence. She is seen smiling and weeping, walking with maidenly decorum in the street, praying at the church, merry at festivals, mourning at funerals; and her smiles and tears, her gentleness, her reserve, all the sweet qualities of her life, and the peace of her death, are told of with such tenderness and refinement, such pathetic melancholy, such delicate purity, and such passionate vehemence, that she remains, and will always remain, the loveliest and most womanly woman of the Middle Ages, — at once absolutely real and truly ideal.

The meaning of the name *La Vita Nuova* has been the subject of animated discussion among the commentators. Literally *The New Life*, it has been questioned whether this phrase meant simply early life, or life made new by the first experience and lasting influence of love. The latter interpretation seems the most appropriate to Dante's turn of mind and to his condition of feeling at the time when the little book appeared. To him it was the record of that life which the presence of Beatrice had made new.

But whatever be the true significance of the title, this *New Life* is full, not only of the youthfulness of its author, but also of the fresh and youthful spirit of the time. Italy, after a long period of childhood, was now becoming possessed of the powers of maturity. Society, (to borrow a fine figure from Lamennais,) like a river, which, long lost in marshes, had at length regained its channel, after stagnating for centuries, was once more rapidly advancing. Throughout Italy there was a morning freshness, and the thrill and exhilaration of conscious activity. Her imagination was roused by the revival of ancient and now new learning, by the stories of travellers, by the gains of commerce, by the excitements of religion and the alarms of superstition. She was boastful, jealous, quarrelsome, lavish, magnificent, full of fickleness, — exhibiting on all sides the exuberance, the magnanimity, the folly of youth. After the long winter of the Dark Ages, spring had come, and the earth was renewing its beauty. And above all other cities in these days Florence was full of the pride of life. Civil brawls had not yet reduced her to become an easy prey for foreign conquerors. She was famous for wealth, and her spirit had risen with prosperity. Many years before, one of the Provençal Troubadours, writing to his friend in verse, had said: "Friend Gaucelm, if you go to Tuscany, seek a shelter in the noble city of the Florentines, which is named Florence. There all true valor is found; there joy and song and love are perfect and adorned." And if this

was true in the earlier years of the thirteenth century, it was still truer of its close; for much of early simplicity and purity of manners had disappeared before the increasing luxury (*le morbidezze d' Egitto*, as Boccaccio terms it) and the gathered wealth of the city, — so that gayety and song more than ever abounded. "It is to be noted," says Giovanni Villani, writing of this time, "it is to be noted that Florence and her citizens were never in a happier condition." The chroniclers tell of constant festivals and celebrations. "In the year 1283, in the month of June, at the feast of St. John, the city of Florence being in a happy and good state of repose, — a tranquil and peaceable state, excellent for merchants and artificers, — there was formed a company of a thousand men or more, all clothed in white dresses, with a leader called the Lord of Love, who devoted themselves to games and sports and dancing, going through the city with trumpets and other instruments of joy and gladness, and feasting often together. And this court lasted for two months, and was the most noble and famous that ever was held in Florence or in all Tuscany, and many gentlemen came to it, and many jongleurs, and all were welcomed and honorably cared for." Every year, the summer was opened with May and June festivals. Florence was rejoicing in abundance and beauty. Nor was it only in passing gayeties that the cheerful and liberal temper of the people was displayed.

The many great works of Art which were begun and carried on to completion at this time show with what large spirit the whole city was inspired, and under what strong influences of public feeling the early life of Dante was led. Civil liberty and strength were producing their legitimate results. Little republic as she was, Florence was great enough for great undertakings. Never was there such a noble activity within the narrow compass of her walls as from about 1265, when Dante was born, to the end of the century. In these thirty-five years the stout walls and the tall tower of the Bargello were built, the grand foundations of the Palazzo Vecchio and of the unrivalled Duomo were laid, and both in one year; the Baptistery — *Il mio bel San Giovanni* — was adorned with a new covering of marble; the churches of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce — the finest churches even now in Florence — were begun and carried far on to completion. Each new work was at once the fruit and the seed of glorious energy. The small city, of less than one hundred thousand inhabitants, the little republic not so large as Rhode Island or Delaware, was setting an example which later and larger and richer republics have not followed. It might well, indeed, be called a "new life" for Florence, as well as for Dante. When it was determined to supply the place of the old church of Santa Reparata with a new cathedral, a decree was passed in words of memorable spirit: "Whereas it is the highest interest of

a people of illustrious origin so to proceed in their affairs that men may perceive from their external works that their doings are at once wise and magnanimous, it is therefore ordered that Arnolfo, architect of our commune, prepare the model or design for the rebuilding of Santa Reparata, with such supreme and lavish magnificence that neither the industry nor the capacity of man shall be able to devise anything more grand or more beautiful; inasmuch as the most judicious in this city have pronounced the opinion, in public and private conferences, that no work of the commune should be undertaken, unless the design be to make it correspondent with a heart which is of the greatest nature, because composed of the spirit of many citizens united together in one single will,"* The records of few other cities show anything of so lofty a tone as this.

It would be strange, indeed, if the youthful book of one so sensitive to external influences as Dante did not give evidence of sympathy with such pervading emotion. One may say that only at such a period, when strength of sentiment was finding vent in all manner of free expression, was such a book possible. Confidence, frankness, directness in the rendering of personal feeling, are rare, except in conditions of society when the emotional spirit is stronger than the critical.

The most marked characteristic of art at this time and of poetry as represented by Dante was an assertion of freedom, and a return to nature as the source not only of inspiration but of strength. Old and authoritative systems were discarded. The established mannerism and conventional forms which had shackled genius and restrained imagination yielded to the strong impulse of vigorous and natural life, which restored truth of expression and truth of feeling to painting and to poetry, and opened the way to modern art and literature by achievements which in spiritual significance have never since been surpassed.

The Italian poets, before Dante, may be broadly divided into two classes. The first was that of the troubadours, who wrote in the Provençal language, and were hardly to be distinguished from their contemporaries of the South of France. They gave expression in their verses to the ideas of love, gallantry, and valor which formed the base of the complex and artificial system of chivalry, repeating one after the other the same fancies and thoughts in similar formulas of words, without scope or truth of imagination, with rare exhibitions of individual feeling, with little regard for Nature. Ingenuity is more characteristic of their poetry than force, subtilty more obvious in it than beauty. The second and later class were poets who wrote in the Italian tongue, but still under the influence of the poetic code which had governed the compositions of their Provençal predecessors. Their poetry is, for the most part, a faded copy of an unsub-

* Cicognara, *Storia della Scultura*, II. 147.

stantial original, — an echo of sounds originally faint. Truth and poetry were effectually divided. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, however, a few poets appeared whose verses give evidence of some native life, and are enlivened by a freer play of fancy and a greater truthfulness of feeling. Guido Guinicelli, who died in 1276, when Dante was eleven years old, and, a little later, Guido Cavalcanti, and some few others, trusting more than had been done before to their own inspiration, show themselves as the forerunners of a better day. But as, in painting, Margheritone and Cimabue, standing between the old and the new styles, exhibit rather a vague striving than a fulfilled attainment, so is it with these poets. There is little that is distinguishingly individual in them. Love is still treated mostly as an abstraction, and one poet might adopt another's love verses with few changes of expression so far as any manifest difference of personal feeling is concerned.

Not so with Dante. The *Vita Nuova*, although retaining many forms and expressions derived from earlier poets, is his, and could be the work of no other. Nor was he unaware of this difference between himself and those that had gone before him, or ignorant of its nature. Describing himself to Buonagiunta da Lucca in Purgatory, he says: —

"'One am I, who, whenever
Love doth inspire me, note, and in that measure
Which he within me dictates, singing go.'
'O brother, now I see,' he said, 'the knot
Which me, the Notary, and Guittone held
Short of the sweet new style that now I hear.
I do perceive full clearly how your pens
Go closely following after him who dictates,
Which with our own forsooth came not to pass.'"

Purgatory, XXIV. 53–60.

As Love was the common theme of the verses from which Buonagiunta drew his contrast, the difference between them lay plainly in sincerity of feeling and truth of expression. The following close upon the dictates of his heart was the distinguishing merit of Dante's love poetry over all that had preceded it and most of what has followed it. There are, however, some among his earlier poems in which the "sweet new style" is scarcely heard, — and others of a later period, in which the customary metaphysical and fanciful subtilties of the elder poets are drawn out to an unwonted fineness. These were concessions to a ruling mode, — concessions the more readily made, because in complete harmony with the strong subtilizing and allegorizing tendencies of Dante's own mind. Still, so far as he adopts the modes of his predecessors in this first book of his, Dante surpasses them all in their own way. He leaves them far behind him, and already sees opening before him new paths which he is to tread alone.

But there is yet another tendency of the times, to which Dante, in his later works, has given the fullest and most characteristic expression, and which exhibits itself curiously in the *Vita Nuova*. Corresponding with the new ardor for the arts, and in sympathy with

it, was a newly awakened and generally diffused ardor for learning, especially for the various branches of philosophy. Science was leaving the cloister, in which she had sat in dumb solitude, and coming out into the world. But the limits and divisions of knowledge were not firmly marked out. The relations of learning to truth were not clearly understood. The minds of men were quickened by a new sense of freedom, and stimulated by ardor of imagination. New worlds of undiscovered knowledge loomed vaguely along the horizon. Fancy invaded the domain of philosophy; and the poets disguised the subtleties of metaphysics under the garb of verses of love. To be a proper poet was not only to be a writer of verses, but to be a master of learning. Boccaccio describes Guido Cavalcanti as "one of the best logicians in the world, and as a most excellent natural philosopher," but says nothing of his poetry.

Dante, more than any other man of his time, exhibited in himself the general zeal for knowledge. His genius had two distinct and yet often intermingling parts, — the poetic and the scientific. No learning came amiss to him. He was born a student, as he was born a poet, — and had he never written a single poem, he would still have been famous as the most profound scholar of his times. Far as he surpassed his contemporaries in poetry, he was no less their superior in the depth and the extent of his knowledge. And this double nature of his genius is plainly shown in many parts of *The New Life*. A youthful incapacity to draw clearly the line between the part of the student and the part of the poet is manifest in it. The display of his acquisitions is curiously mingled with the narrative of his emotions. This is not to be charged against him as pedantry. His love of learning partook of the nature of passion; his judgment was not yet able, if indeed it ever became able, to establish the division between the abstractions of the intellect and the affections of the heart. And more than this, his early claim of honor as a poet was to be justified by his possession and exhibition of the fruits of study.

Moreover, the mind of Dante was of a quality which led him to unite learning with poetry in a manner peculiar to himself. He was essentially a mystic. The dark and hidden side of things was not less present to his imagination than the visible and plain. The range of human capacity in the comprehension of the spiritual world was not then marked by as numerous boundary-stones of failure as now define the way. Impossibilities were sought for with the same confident hope as realities. The alchemists and the astrologers believed in the attainment of results as tangible and real as the gains which travellers brought back from the marvellous and still unachieved East. The mystical properties of numbers, the influence of the stars, the powers of cordials and elixirs, the virtues of precious stones, were received as established facts, and opened

long vistas of discovery before the student's eyes. A ring of mystery surrounded the familiar world, and outside the known lands of the earth lay a region unknown except to the fancy, from which strange gales blew and strange clouds floated up. Curiosity and inquiry were stimulated and made earnest by wonder. Wild, imaginative speculations formed the basis of serious and patient studies. Dante, partaking to the full in the eager spirit of the times, sharing all the ardor of the pursuit of knowledge, and with a spiritual insight which led him into regions of mystery where no others ventured, naturally associated the knowledge which opened the way for him with the poetic imagination which cast light upon it. To him science was but another name for poetry.

Much learning has been expended in the attempt to show that the doctrine of Love, which is displayed in *The New Life*, is derived, more or less directly, from the philosophy of Plato. It has been supposed that this little autobiographic story, full of the most intimate personal revelations, and glowing with a sincere passion, was deliberately written in accordance with a preconceived theory. A certain Platonic form of expression, often covering ideas very far removed from those of Plato, was common to the earlier, colder, and less truthful poets. Some strains of such Platonism, derived from the poems of his predecessors, are perhaps to be found in this first book of Dante's. But there is nothing to show that he had intentionally adopted the teachings of the ancient philosopher. It may well, indeed, be doubted if, at the time of its composition, he had read any of Plato's works. Such Platonism as exists in *The New Life* was of that unconscious kind which is shared by every youth of thoughtful nature and sensitive temperament, who makes of his beloved a type and image of divine beauty, and who through the loveliness of the creature is led up to the perfection of the Creator.

The essential qualities of the *Vita Nuova*, those which afford direct illustration of Dante's character, as distinguished from such as may be called youthful, or merely literary, or biographical, correspond in striking measure with those of the *Divina Commedia*. The earthly Beatrice is exalted to the heavenly in the later poem; but the entire purity and intensity of feeling with which she is reverently regarded in the *Divina Commedia* are scarcely less characteristic of the earlier work. The imagination which makes the unseen seen, and the unreal real, belongs alike to the one and to the other. The *Vita Nuova* is chiefly occupied with a series of visions; the *Divina Commedia* is one long vision. The sympathy with the spirit and impulses of the time, which in the first reveals the youthful impressibility of the poet, in the last discloses itself in maturer forms, in more personal expressions. In the *Vita Nuova* it is a sympathy mastering the natural spirit; in the *Divina Commedia* the sympathy is con-

trolled by the force of established character. The change is that from him who follows to him who commands. It is the privilege of men of genius, not only to give more than others to the world, but also to receive more from it. Sympathy, in its full comprehensiveness, is the proof of the strongest individuality. By as much as Dante or Shakespeare learnt of and entered into the hearts of men, by so much was his own nature strengthened and made peculiarly his own. *The New Life* shows the first stages of that genius, the first proofs of that comprehensive sympathy, which at length find their full manifestation in the *Divine Comedy*. It is like the first blade of spring grass, rich with the promise of the golden harvest.

II.

The following remarks on the *Vita Nuova* are from the Introduction to Part II. of "The Early Italian Poets," by my friend, the poet and painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the son of Gabriele Rossetti, the distinguished commentator on Dante. The second part of this delightful volume contains a complete translation of the *Vita Nuova*, so excellent, and made in so poetic and sympathetic a spirit, that my own might well seem a work of supererogation. But my translation was made (in 1857*) before I knew that Mr. Rossetti was engaged in the same labor of love, and the methods we respectively followed are so different, that perhaps it is well that both translations should be published. Mr. Rossetti has adopted a freer style of version than that which I have sought, and his poetic sensibility has enabled him to give a grace and charm to his work which may be missed in mine.

The feeling that has controlled me in the execution of the work has been that of regard for the letter of the original, in the belief that thus its essential spirit could be best rendered. In dealing with the intimate revelations of a character so great and so peculiar as that of Dante, a respectful deference is required for the very words in which they are contained. Dante has a right to demand this homage of his translator.

There is no other volume in English from which so much may be learned of that brilliant circle of poets of which Dante was the central light, as from Mr. Rossetti's book. It is a work not only of learning, but of genius.

"A knowledge of the *Vita Nuova* is necessary to the full comprehension of the part borne by Beatrice in the *Commedia*. Moreover, it is only from the perusal of its earliest and then un-

* A portion of my translation, accompanied by a part of what now appears as the Essays and Notes in this volume, was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1859, and was afterwards, in the course of the same year, printed in a volume for private circulation.

divulged self-communings that we can divine the whole bitterness of wrong to such a soul as Dante's, its poignant sense of abandonment, or its deep and jealous refuge in memory. Above all, it is here that we find the first manifestations of that wisdom of obedience, that natural breath of duty, which afterwards, in the *Commedia*, lifted up a mighty voice for warning and testimony. Throughout the *Vita Nuova* there is a strain like the first falling murmur which reaches the ear in some remote meadow, and prepares us to look upon the sea.

"Boccaccio, in his Life of Dante, tells us that the great poet, in later life, was ashamed of this work of his youth. Such a statement hardly seems reconcilable with the allusions to it made or implied in the *Commedia;* but it is true that the *Vita Nuova* is a book which only youth could have produced, and which must chiefly remain sacred to the young, to each of whom the figure of Beatrice, less life-like than love-like, will seem the friend of his own heart. Nor is this, perhaps, its least praise. To tax its author with effeminacy on account of the extreme sensitiveness evinced by this narrative of his love, would be manifestly unjust, when we find that, though love alone is the theme of the *Vita Nuova*, war already ranked among its author's experiences at the period to which it relates. In the year 1289, the one preceding the death of Beatrice, Dante served with the foremost cavalry in the great battle of Campaldino, on the 11th of June, when the Florentines defeated the people of Arezzo. In the autumn of the next year, 1290, when for him, by the death of Beatrice, the city, as he says, 'sat solitary,' such refuge as he might find from his grief was sought in action and danger; for we learn from the *Commedia* (Hell, Canto XXI.) that he served in the war then waged by Florence upon Pisa, and was present at the surrender of Caprona. He says, using the reminiscence to give life to a description in his great way: —

> 'I 've seen the troops out of Caprona go
> On terms, affrighted thus, when on the spot
> They found themselves with foemen compassed so.'
>
> CAYLEY'S *Translation.*

"A word should be said here of the title of Dante's autobiography. The adjective *Nuovo, nuova,* or *Novello, novella,* literally *New,* is often used by Dante and other early writers in the sense of *young.* This has induced some editors of the *Vita Nuova* to explain the title as meaning *Early Life.* I should be glad on some accounts to adopt this supposition, as everything is a gain which increases clearness to the modern reader; but on consideration I think the more mystical interpretation of the words as *New Life* (in reference to that revulsion of his being which Dante so minutely describes as having occurred simultaneously with his first sight of Beatrice) appears to be the primary one, and therefore the most necessary to be given in a translation. The probability may be that both were meant, but this I cannot convey."

ON THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE VITA NUOVA.

THE question as to the period at which Dante completed the composition of the *Vita Nuova* is one not easily determined, and has given rise to much controversy.

Without entering on a discussion of the different opinions that have been held on this point,—from that of the Canonico Biscioni, who, regarding the work as a mere allegory, attributes it to Dante's twenty-fourth year,* to that of the elder Rossetti, who declares his belief that it was not completed until after the year 1314, when Dante was forty-nine years old,† thus leaving a space for controversy of twenty-five years, — I propose to examine the question with such light as Dante, the only absolute authority upon it, affords us directly or indirectly.

As regards more than one half of the *Vita Nuova*, — that is, as regards all that portion which relates to the life of Beatrice (for I consider as untenable the notion that the Beatrice of *The New Life* is an allegoric figure), — there seems no reason to question that the poems contained in it were written at the periods to which the poet assigns them, previous to her death in 1290. It is possible, however, that some of them may have received additions or other alterations at a later time. After Beatrice's death, we have the sonnet written to commemorate the first anniversary of her departure from this world. This brings us to June, 1291. Then comes the account of the wandering of Dante's affections, the date of which is left undetermined in indefinite expressions. These expressions are, however, of such a kind as to imply no long duration of time. His first sight of the gentle lady whose compassion moved him is said to have been *poi per alquanto tempo*, "some little time after" the anniversary of Beatrice's death. The feeling for this lady possessed him, as he says, *alquanti di*, "some few days." Then *after* this tribulation he tells us of the passage of pilgrims through the city, and *afterwards* of the request made to him by two ladies for some of his rhymed words, in answer to which he wrote the last sonnet of the volume. The closing paragraph of *The New Life* begins thus: "After this sonnet a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things which made me propose to speak no more of this blessed one, until I could more worthily treat of her."

* *Prefazio alle Prose di Dante*, (Firenze, 1723,) p. xxv.

† See his curious, learned, and extravagant book, *Sullo Spirito Antipapale*, (London, 1832,) pp. 159, 160; and especially his work entitled *La Beatrice di Dante*, (London, 1842,) pp. 69, 70.

Such is the whole of the direct evidence afforded by the *Vita Nuova* itself as to the time of its composition. It is plainly the design of the poet to leave the impression on the minds of his readers that the book in which he had recorded his love was completed within a short time after the first anniversary of the death of Beatrice. In poetic intention it is the work as well as the story of his youth.

But a difficulty arises here from the fact that in the second treatise of the *Convito*, which was written by Dante in middle life, there are statements in formal contradiction to some of those of the *Vita Nuova*, and which, however they may be explained, cannot be interpreted so as to render the narratives in the two works literally consistent with each other. It is a question of interest how these differences are to be accounted for and reconciled, and it is of the more interest because Dante says in the first chapter of the first treatise of the *Convito:* "If in the present work, which is called a Banquet, and I wish that it may be so, the discourse is after a more manly fashion than in *The New Life*, I do not therefore intend in any respect to detract from that, but greatly to support that work by this." And he goes on to say: "In the former I spoke at the entrance to my youth, in the latter [I speak] youth having now passed." In a later passage of the *Convito* (IV. 24), he tells us that youth, *gioventute*, begins with the twenty-fifth and ends with the forty-fifth year of life. Thus a book written by him in the beginning of youth would belong to the years immediately following his twenty-fifth, — that is, to 1291 or 1292. So far the statements of the *Convito* confirm the indications of the *Vita Nuova* as to the period of the composition of the latter.

In the account which the poet gives, near the end of the *Vita Nuova*, of his faithlessness to the memory of Beatrice through excitement of feeling toward a gentle lady who looked at him compassionately, and awakened thoughts of love within him, there is not a single expression which could suggest that the narrative was to be taken in any other way than as a statement of actual facts. It records an experience which a heart so susceptible and yet so stable as Dante's was peculiarly liable to pass through. But in the *Convito* (II. 13) he tells us that the whole of this passage in the *Vita Nuova* has an allegorical character, and that the gentle lady of whom he was enamored was no other than divine Philosophy, the daughter of God. He says (*Convito*, II. 2) that the star Venus had twice revolved in its orbit since the death of Beatrice when for the first time this gentle dame appeared before him, — that is, about fifteen months had passed. This corresponds with the time indicated in the *Vita Nuova*. But in a later passage (*Convito*, II. 13) he says that a space of perhaps thirty months elapsed from the first sight of this lady, or, as interpreted, from his first resort to Philosophy, before she took com-

plete possession of his soul. These thirty months do not correspond with the "some few days" which we are told in the *Vita Nuova* was the duration of the dominion of the compassionate lady over his heart. Now if the whole of this period be embraced in the narrative of *The New Life*, the completion of the *Vita Nuova* must be postponed to a period certainly not less than four years after the death of Beatrice. But this is so opposed to the indications which the little book itself affords, that I am inclined to believe the interpretation in the *Convito* of this passage of Dante's life to be a fanciful one, and that its statements in regard to time are to be accepted rather as fixing a period for the course of Dante's philosophic and religious study, than as establishing a limit for the events of *The New Life*.

For even if we accept the declaration of the *Convito*, and regard the narrative in the *Vita Nuova* as allegorical, difficulties still remain. In *The New Life* the struggle between the old love and the new is represented as terminating in favor of the former. In the *Convito* the contrary is the case. In *The Vita Nuova* the new love is represented as a vile and unworthy weakness. But in the *Convito* it is spoken of as of the highest virtue. For instance he says (II. 2), "I lifted up my voice thitherward whence proceeded the victory of the new thought which was most powerful, as a celestial power." And again (II. 13), "I felt myself raised from the thought of the first love to the virtue of this."

These contradictions existing between the two books appear to be irreconcilable, even if we accept Dante's assertion that the gentle lady of the *Vita Nuova* was simply the figure that he gave to Philosophy. But I do not feel inclined to accept this assertion. It seems to me that a probable explanation of the diversity in the two representations is to be found in the following view.

Let us assume that the narrative in the *Vita Nuova* is to be taken literally, and was written but a short time after the occurrence of the events which it records. The events connected with the lady who for a time disputed Beatrice's sovereignty over Dante's heart passed, leaving but slight trace either on his memory or on his life. Their principal result had been to add some pages to the book of his love. The peaceful and entire rule of Beatrice in his affections seemed, as time went on, never to have been really disturbed by the intrusion of any other passion. In maturer years, as he looked back at the period of his sorrow, he saw only how, under the healing ministrations of Philosophy, in which he included the teachings of religion, the bitterness and anguish of grief for her loss had been succeeded by a calm strength and self-possession, in which the memories and the hopes connected with Beatrice had taken a place in his spiritual life corresponding to that which her actual presence had filled in his mortal existence. And when, at a late period, he came to the composition of the *Con-*

vito, and found in the book of his youth this account of the power which another feeling had for a time exerted over him, disregardful of the fact that it had been a real though transient feeling, and led by the allegorizing tendencies of his intellect, he treated it as simply a type of his first entrance into the course of study, in other words into the acquaintance with Philosophy, which, while consoling him for Beatrice's loss, had also fitted him by slow degrees for that companionship with her through the spheres of Heaven which in imagination he possessed, and of which he was about to reveal the supernal glories and delights in his *Paradiso*. And he was the rather induced to give this formal (this ideally true, though literally false) interpretation to that passage of his *New Life*, in order to secure himself against the misinterpretations of low souls, who would find in the account of the lady who had for a time made him think of other love than that for Beatrice a proof of fickleness, and a ground for charging him with exaggeration in assigning to his first, his constant, his only real love, a station so exalted.

It may then be assumed that the *Vita Nuova* was virtually complete in 1292. But supposing this to have been the case, it is not unlikely that additions to its substance and alterations of its form were made after that period. Upon this point the only evidence is indirect, but it is of such a kind as to lead toward the conclusion that some additions may have been made to the book a considerable time after its first putting together.

The last sonnet but one of the *Vita Nuova* is that addressed to the pilgrims who were on their way to Rome "to see the blessed image which Jesus Christ left to us as the likeness of his most beautiful countenance." Now, in the year of Jubilee, 1300, this image, the Veronica, was the chief object of worship which drew pilgrims to Rome. Giovanni Villani, who himself made the pilgrimage, says: "For the consolation of Christian pilgrims, the Veronica of the kerchief of Christ was shown in St. Peter's every Friday and solemn feast-day. For the sake of which a great part of the Christians who were then living made this pilgrimage, as well women as men, from distant and various lands, from far and near." (*Cronica*, VIII. 36.)

It is not, indeed, a necessary conclusion from the fact that pilgrims were led to go to Rome to see the Veronica in the year 1300, that Dante's sonnet refers to that year. The Veronica was displayed on certain high festivals in other years than those of Jubilee; but it seems probable that Dante composed this sonnet in that year, as he tells us that it was written at the time "when *many people were going* to see the likeness of our Lord."

Again, the concluding words of the little book, as they now stand, have an obvious and direct reference to the vision of the *Divina Commedia*, and to Dante's intention of writing his great poem. The words imply that the

intention was already taking form, and there is no reason for supposing that this work, to which he consecrated his later life, was undertaken before the year 1300, to which it professedly belongs, and in which he experienced the vision which it reports. The scope of the *Divina Commedia* is such as could only have been conceived by a maturely experienced man, and the execution is so coherent that it is hardly possible to doubt that the design must have been complete from the beginning.

It seems, then, not unlikely that the *Vita Nuova*, as originally composed, ended with the sonnet, *Lasso! per forza de molti sospiri*, ("Alas! by force of sighs that oft return," *ante*, p. 91,) a sonnet composed, as the poet tells us, after Beatrice had appeared to him in a vision, "in those crimson garments in which she had first appeared unto mine eyes, and she seemed to me young, of the same age as when I first saw her." And he wrote it in order that no one might have any doubt that the vain temptation which had led him away from Beatrice for a time was utterly destroyed. The book, if this sonnet were the last that belonged to it, would have ended with the words, —

"That sweet name of my lady written plain,
And many words relating to her death."

An argument for this view is to be found also in the character of the vision in which Beatrice showed herself to him such as she was when he first beheld her. The end thus corresponded with the beginning of the story of his life made new by love.

If the *Vita Nuova* originally ended here, there is nothing improbable in the supposition that Dante a few years later added some pages to it, after the conception of the *Divina Commedia* had taken form in his imagination, in order to connect the work of his youth more directly, and in indissoluble relation, with the work of his maturer years. The *Vita Nuova* was in fact the real introduction of the *Divina Commedia*. The Beatrice of the one was the forerunner of the Beatrice of the other. In his love for the living Beatrice he had already foretasted the joys of the eternal world. Her beauty, her grace, her goodness, her gentleness, had even upon earth seemed to him divinely excellent, — types of divine realities. His imagination had beheld a miracle in her. And so when he exalts her in the *Divina Commedia*, her who had been a simple Florentine maiden and wife, — when by virtue of his personal faith he sets her in glory above the Saints, near to the Most Holy Virgin herself, and represents her as the favored one of the Almighty, — he is but carrying out the fervent conceptions of his *New Life* to their required and true conclusions. In this was Dante's poetic power fully displayed, and in this was the depth, purity, and consistency of his nature revealed, that without incongruity, without any jar of the most delicate harmonies of feeling, he could transform his earthly to a heavenly Love, and make the story of his youth the only fit introduction to a poem "whose subject was man," and whose

scene was laid in the terrors and the glories of the eternal world.

The portion which I suppose may have been added in 1300 to the *Vita Nuova* as it originally stood, contains, in addition to the sonnet addressed to the pilgrims, one other sonnet, in which there is nothing that would enable us to fix its date with confidence, but which is of such character that it may without improbability, nay, rather with some likelihood, be assigned to the later period. It is the last sonnet in the volume, and Dante tells in it of the journey of his sigh drawn upward by a new Intelligence to the highest realm of Heaven, where it beholds his lady in honor. But the pilgrim spirit beholds her such that he brings back an account of her which Dante is not fully able to comprehend. But, after the vision which the poet records in the immediately following passage, he says that it is his study and his hope to speak of her hereafter as was never spoken of any woman. And thus this last sonnet seems to give expression to the natural doubts and dimness of anticipatory conceptions which attended the setting forth upon the *Divina Commedia.*

It is, furthermore, to be noted as a peculiarity of this sonnet, and as an indication of its composition at a later period than those which precede it, that whereas the visions which they report have reference, without exception, to things which the poet had experienced, or seen, or fancied, when awake, thus appearing to be dependent on previous waking excitements, the vision related in this sonnet seems, on the contrary, to have had its origin in no external circumstance, but to be the result of a purely internal condition of feeling. It was a *new* Intelligence that led his sigh upwards, — a new Intelligence which prepared him for his vision at Easter in 1300.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE VITA NUOVA.

It is to be observed, upon close examination, that the poems of the *Vita Nuova* are arranged in such order as to suggest an intention on the part of Dante to give to his work a symmetrical structure. If the arrangement be accidental, or governed simply by the relation of the poems to the sequence of the events described in the narrative that connects them, it is certainly curious that they should have happened to fall into such order as to give to the little book a surprising regularity of construction.

The succession of the thirty-one poems of *The New Life* is as follows: —

5 sonnets,
1 ballad,
4 sonnets,
1 canzone,
4 sonnets,
1 canzone,
3 sonnets,
1 imperfect canzone,
1 canzone,
1 sonnet,
1 imperfect canzone,
8 sonnets.

At first sight no regularity appears in their order, but a little analysis reveals it. The most important poems, not only from their form and length, but also from their substance, are the three canzoni. Now it will be observed that the first canzone is preceded by ten and followed by four minor poems. The second canzone, which is by far the most elaborate poem of the whole, stands alone, holding the central place in the volume. The third canzone is preceded by four and followed by ten minor poems. Thus the order appears as follows: —

10 minor poems,
1 canzone,
4 minor poems,
1 canzone,
4 minor poems,
1 canzone,
10 minor poems.

Here, leaving the central canzone to stand by itself, we have three series of ten poems each. It will be observed further, that the first and the third canzone stand at the same distance from the central poem, and that ten minor poems separate the one from the beginning, the other from the end of the volume, and that in each instance nine of these poems are sonnets. It is also worth remark, that while the first canzone is followed by four sonnets, and the third is preceded by three sonnets and an imperfect canzone, this imperfect canzone is a single stanza, which has the same number of lines, and the same arrangement of its lines in respect to rhyme, as a sonnet, differing in this respect from the other canzoni. It may be fairly classed as a sonnet, its only difference from one being in the name that Dante has given to it.

The symmetrical construction now appears still more clearly: —

10 minor poems, all but one of them sonnets,
1 canzone,
4 sonnets,
1 canzone,
4 sonnets,
1 canzone,
10 minor poems, all but one of them sonnets.

It may be taken as evidence that this regularity of arrangement was intentional, that a comparison of the first with the third canzone shows them to be mutually related, one being the balance of the other. The first begins: —

"Donne ch' avete intelletto d' amore
Io vo' con voi della mia donna dire."

and the last line of its first stanza is,

"Chè non è cosa da parlarne altrui."

In the first stanza of the third there is a distinct reference to these words: —

"E perchè mi ricorda ch' io parlai
Della mia donna, mentre che vivia,
Donne gentili, volentier con vui
Non vo' parlarne altrui
Se non a cor gentil che 'n donna sia."

The second stanza of the first canzone relates to the desire which is felt in Heaven for Beatrice. The corresponding stanza of the third declares that it was this desire for her which led to her being taken from the world. The third stanza of the one relates to the operation of her virtues and beauties upon earth; of the other, to the remembrance of them. There is a similarity of expression to be traced throughout.

In the last stanza, technically called the *commiato*, or dismissal, in which the poem is personified and sent on its way, in the first canzone it is called *figliuola d' amor*, in the third, *figliuola di tristizia*. One was the daughter of love, the other of sorrow; one was the poem recording Beatrice's life, the other her death. It is thus that one is made to serve as the complement and balance of the other, in the structure of *The New Life*.

It may be possible to trace a similar relation between some of the minor poems of the beginning and the end of the volume; but I have not observed it, if it exists.

The second, the central canzone, is, as I have said, the most important poem in the volume, from the force of imagination displayed in it, — from its serving to connect the life of Beatrice with her death; and thus it is, as of right, placed in the position which it holds in reference to the poems which precede and follow it.

If a reason be inquired for that might lead Dante thus symmetrically to arrange the poems of this little book in a triple series of ten around a central unit, it may perhaps be found in the value which he set upon ten as the perfect number, while in the three times repeated series, culminating in a single central poem, he may have pleased himself with some fanciful analogy to that three and one on which he dwells in the passage in which he treats of the friendliness of the number nine to Beatrice. At any rate, as he there says, "this is the reason which I see for it, and which best pleaseth me; though perchance a more subtile reason might be seen therein by a more subtile person."

NOTES.

I.

The book of my memory. So in the *Paradiso*, XXIII. 54, Dante calls the memory, "Il libro che 'l preterito rassegna," — "The book that chronicles the past." This metaphor, as Mr. Theodore Martin has remarked, "is characteristic of the intensity with which he both observed and felt." In the *Inferno*, II. 8, he says, "O mente! che scrivesti ciò ch' io vidi," — "O memory! that didst write down what I saw." And again in the canzone beginning, "E' m' incresce di me sì malamente," he uses the same expression: —

"Secondo che si trova
Nel libro della mente," —

"According as is found in the book of memory." Chaucer and Shakespeare both use the same metaphor; it is indeed a common one with the poets, and its use by Dante is worth noting only because of its peculiar appropriateness to the distinctness and strength of his own memory, as if its recollections were registered where every day he turned the leaf to read them.

Incipit Vita Nova. "The New Life beginneth."

II.

Nine times now, since my birth. The number *nine* plays a great part in this little book. According to the astronomy of Ptolemy, which Dante adopted, there were nine movable concentric heavens or spheres, in the centre of which the earth rested immovable, while outside all was the tenth, — the Empyrean, — immovable and most divine, the source of the motion of the Crystalline Heaven, the *primo mobile*, or first movable, which regulates with its motion the daily movements of all the other spheres. (*Conv.* II. 3, 15.)

By *the heaven of light* Dante means the sphere of the Sun, the fourth in order above the earth, according to his system, which, as he tells us, "moves, following the movement of the starry

sphere, from west to east one degree in a hundred years." (*Conv.* II. 6.) *One of the twelve parts of a degree* would consequently be passed through in eight and a half years. As Dante was born in 1265, it follows that his first meeting with Beatrice was in 1274.

Who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore she was so called, that is, who knew not that the name Beatrice — signifying, *she who blesseth* — belonged to her by right of nature. The passage is, however, obscure in the original, and the commentators are much divided as to its meaning.

The spirit of life .... began to tremble. Compare with this passage the canzone beginning, "E' m' incresce di me sì malamente," especially that portion of it in which Dante speaks of the effect of the first sight of his lady upon him: —

"E, se 'l libro non erra,
Lo spirito maggior tremò sì forte,
Che parve ben, che morte
Per lui in questo mondo giunta fosse."

"And if the book errs not,
The greater spirit trembled so amain,
That it appeared full plain
That death for it had in this world arrived."

With this passage of the *New Life* should be compared the description which Dante gives of his meeting with Beatrice in the *Purgatorio*, XXX. 28 – 48: —

"Thus in the bosom of a cloud of flowers
Which from those hands angelical ascended,
And downward fell again inside and out,
Over her snow-white veil with olive cinct
Appeared a lady under a green mantle,
Vested in color of the living flame.
And my own spirit, which already now
Had been so long a time, that in her presence
Trembling with awe it had not stood abashed,
Without more knowledge having by mine eyes,
Through occult virtue that from her proceeded
Of ancient love the mighty influence felt.
As soon as on my vision smote the power
Sublime, that had already pierced me through
Ere from my boyhood I had yet come forth,
To the left hand I turned with that reliance
With which the little child runs to his mother,
When he has fear, or when he is afflicted,
To say unto Virgilius: 'Not a drachm
Of blood remains in me, that does not tremble;
I know the traces of the ancient flame.'"

Longfellow's Translation.

Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi. "Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me."

Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra. "Now hath appeared your bliss."

Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps. "Woe is me, wretched! because often from this time forth shall I be hindered."

She seemeth not the daughter of mortal man, but of God.

Οὐδὲ ἐοίκει
Ἀνδρός γε θνητοῦ παῖς ἔμμεναι, ἀλλὰ θεοῖο.
Iliad, XXIV. 258.

Boccaccio has closely imitated this section of the *Vita Nuova* in the beginning of his *Filocopo*, introducing even the same citation from Homer.

III.

This most gentle lady,—"questa gentilissima." The usual epithet which Dante in *The New Life* applies to Beatrice is *gentilissima*, "most gentle," while other ladies to whom he refers are called simply *gentile*, "gentle." The term is used with a signification similar to that which it has in our own early literature, and of fuller meaning than it now retains. It refers both to race, as in the phrase "of gentle birth," and to qualities of character.

The canzone to the illustration of which the fourth Treatise of the *Convito* is devoted, is on *gentilezza*, and the poet tells us that gentilesse is a grace of God, the companion of virtue, and bestowed on that soul which God sees to be in perfect harmony with its outward form. And in the comment he says (c. 14), that gentleness and nobleness are the same, and (c. 16) that "by nobleness is meant the perfection of its own nature in anything."

The epithet, as Dante uses it, implies all that is loveliest in person and character, and indicates the perfection of Beatrice in his eyes.

In the *Vita Nuova*, after Beatrice's death, the term *gloriosa* is occasionally substituted for *gentilissima*; and the latter epithet is never applied to her in the *Divine Comedy*. Its appropriateness had ceased, for there was "another glory of the celestial body."

Her ineffable courtesy. "Courtesy" also fails to render the full significance of *cortesia*. In the *Convito* (II. 11) Dante says: "Nothing is more becoming to a lady than courtesy. And let not the wretched herd be deceived, supposing courtesy to be naught else than bounty; for bounty is a special act of courtesy, not courtesy in general. Courtesy and integrity are all one; and because in courts of old the virtues and fair manners were wont to be practised (as to-day the opposite is the case), this word was derived from the courts; and to say courtesy was the same as to say the usage of the court; but, if to-day this word were to be derived from courts, especially from those of Italy, it would mean naught else than depravity."

Ego Dominus tuus. "I am thy Lord."

Vide cor tuum. "Behold thy heart."

Famous poets at that time. The infancy of Italian poetry at this period is indicated by the use here of the word *trovatori*, "troubadour," which I have translated by "poet."

The art of discoursing in rhyme. In the original the phrase is, *l' arte del dire parole per rima*, "the art of saying words with rhyme." The rhymer in those days, when writing was rare, and poetic compositions were often com-

mitted, not to paper, but to memory, was often called *il dicitore in rima*, or simply *il dicitore*.

To every captive soul and gentle heart. This sonnet, the beauty of which is obscured by the darkness of its meaning, is of interest as being the earliest poetic composition by Dante that has been preserved for us, and also as describing a vision. I have already referred to the fact, that this book is in great part composed of the account of a series of visions, and is thus connected in the form of its imaginations with the great work of Dante's later years. As a description of things seen by the spiritual eye, this sonnet is united in poetic relationship to the nobler visions of the *Divine Comedy*. The private stamp of Dante's imagination is indelibly impressed upon it.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. The interruption of the narrative here, and after or before all the following poetic compositions in *The New Life*, by a formal division and analysis of the structure of the poem, interferes with the unity of the story, and sometimes jars on the feelings of the modern reader by seeming to introduce an element of artificiality into the expression of feeling of the depth and simplicity of which it is impossible to doubt. But the literary tastes and habits of Dante's day were so different from ours, that we err in applying our modern standard to his work. In compiling and publishing *The New Life* he was making a great innovation. He was claiming a literary position for his work which had hitherto been refused to all compositions in the vulgar tongue. It was an assault on the literary supremacy, still superstitiously maintained, of the Latin language. He had to prove his right, not only as poet, but also as scholar; to show that his verses were the productions of as much labor and care as if composed in a dead language, and that comments, after the almost universal fashion of the day, were as much in place as upon the verses of a classic author.

The literary taste of the day, moreover, delighted in the subtle distinctions of a formal logic, and the elaborate divisions of a formal rhetoric. In his comment on those poems Dante fell in with the taste, which he himself in some degree shared.

It is to be remembered, too, that the habit of reading was not common, and that many readers might find difficulties in comprehending the point of a sonnet without the assistance of an analysis of it in prose.

There is no ground, then, for fancying any essential incongruity between these passages and the remainder of *The New Life*. They are simply indications of an early stage of literary culture, and their *naiveté* often adds a fresh charm of simplicity to the little book.

He whom I call first of my friends. This was Guido Cavalcanti. Their

friendship was of long duration, beginning thus in Dante's nineteenth year, and ending only with Guido's death in 1300. It may be taken as a proof of its intimacy, as well as of Dante's high estimate of the genius of his friend, that, when in his course through Hell he is recognized by the father of Guido, the first words of the old man to him are: —

"If through this blind
Prison thou goest by loftiness of genius,
Where is my son? and why is he not with thee?"
Inferno, X. 58–60.

An interesting account of Guido is to be found in Mr. Longfellow's note on this passage.

The sonnet of Guido in reply to that sent him by Dante has been preserved, and may be thus translated: —

All worth, in my opinion, thou hast seen,
All joy, and good as much as man may know,
If thou in power of that strong lord hast been,
Who rules the world of honor here below.
For there he hath his life where trouble dies,
And holds discourse within the tender soul;
And unto folk in dreams so sweet he hies,
He bears away their hearts withouten dole.
Your heart he bore away, for in his sight
Death its demand was making for your dame,
Fearful of which he fed her with that heart.
But when he seemed in sorrow to depart,
Sweet was the dream that to its end thus came,
For it was conquered by its opposite.

The meaning of the last two lines of this sonnet is not clear; but as Dante tells us that the true meaning of his dream was not then seen by any one, it is hardly worth while to discuss the possible significance of Cavalcanti's attempt to interpret it.

Two other answers to Dante's sonnet have also come down to us, one by the famous poet Cino da Pistoja, to whom in exile Dante addressed a letter in which he calls him *frater carissime*, and whose poems in the vulgar tongue he praises in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquio*, always citing his own poems in this treatise as by "the friend of Cino"; the other, by Dante da Majano, one of the minor poets of the day. Neither of them is worth translating.

VI.

I composed an epistle in the form of a sirvente. The *sirvente* or *serventese* was a form of poetic composition derived by the Italians from the Provençal poets. The *sirvente* of the Provençals seems to have been originally, as its name indicates, a poem of service or honor, but it soon acquired the character of a poem of praise or satire, seldom treating of matters of love. It was written sometimes in stanzas of eight lines, sometimes in quatrains, but more commonly in triplets, interwoven by the rhyme. But according to Crescimbeni (*Della Poesia Italiana*, II. 13), its construction seems not to have been determined by any fixed rules.

Among Dante's miscellaneous poems

there is a sonnet in which there seems to be a reference to the list of the sixty fair women, on which the name of his lady stood as the ninth. It is addressed to Guido Cavalcanti, and the friend referred to in it under the name of Lapo is supposed to have been one Lapo Gianni, like his friends, a writer of verses in those poetic days. The name of Guido's mistress was Giovanna, and that of Lapo's love was Lagia, as we learn from one of his poems. It is she who is referred to in the sonnet as having stood thirtieth on the roll of fair ladies. The sonnet has an especially modern tone of fancy and feeling, and is known to English readers by a translation of it made by Shelley. The following is a more recent version: —

Guido, I would that Lapo, thou, and I
  Might by enchantment's magic spell be ta'en
  And set aboard a bark, across the main,
  With every wind, as we might choose, to hie.
So no mischance, nor any evil weather
  Might aught of hinderance ever be to us,
  But living always in one liking thus,
  Our will should aye increase to stay together.
And Lady Joan and Lady Beatrice,
  With her the thirtieth upon my roll,
  Might the good wizard bring with us to stay;
Then there would we discourse of love alway,
  And each of them should be content in soul,
  As all of us would surely be, I wis.

VII.

And then I devised this sonnet. This poem belongs to the class of what are called by the Italians *sonnetti doppi*, or *rinterzati*. It is composed of two sextets followed by two quatrains, instead of being formed as a regular sonnet of two quatrains followed by two triplets. The lines of the regular sonnet are all of eleven syllables, while in this form of sonnet, as used by Dante and other writers, the second and fifth lines of each sextet, and the third of each quartet, are of but seven syllables. As in the regular sonnet, there are but four pairs of rhymes, two in the sextets and two in the quatrains.

The next poem but one in *The Vita Nuova* is a sonnet of the same sort, and the only other instance of the use of this form by Dante.

Oh vos omnes, etc. "All ye that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." *Lamentations* i. 12.

VIII.

"*Hear ye what honor Love to her did pay,*
For him in real form I saw make moan
Over the lovely image of the dead;
And oft toward the heaven he raised his head."

To read these lines aright we must understand that by *Love in real form* Dante intends to signify Beatrice herself, whom he had beheld lamenting over the lovely damsel dead. In the sonnet in Section XXIV. he says that Love said to him that this lady, because

"She so resembleth me, hath Love for name."

"*Whose deserves not bliss,*
Let him not hope her company to share."

Possibly these are the words to which Dante refers when he says that in the last part of the words that he said of the dead damsel he touched somewhat on the fact that he had seen her sometimes with his lady.

There is a beautiful sonnet among Dante's minor poems, the closing phrase of which resembles these lines. I translate it as follows: —

Of ladies I beheld a gentle band,
This All Saints Day that is but just now gone,
And one of them, as if the chief, came on,
Leading Love with her upon her right hand.
From out her eyes there darted forth a light,
Which seemed to be a spirit all on fire;
And me to look such boldness did inspire,
I saw upon her face an angel bright.
To whoso worthy was, gave salutation
That lowly and benign one with her eyes,
Filling each heart with noble emulation.
This sovereign one, I wit, from heaven did rise,
And came unto the earth for our salvation,
For who is near her hath of bliss the prize.

In this sonnet there is a play upon the word *salute*, meaning both "salutation" and "salvation." This double meaning of the word is often to be noticed in *The New Life;* and thus in the *De Monarchia*, "Pax vobis, Salus hominum salutabat."

IX.

The journey displeased me, ... because I was going away from my bliss. In the opening sentence of this little book Dante tells us that it is not his intention to copy out in it all the words written under the rubric, *Incipit Vita Nova.* But some of the poems which seem to belong to this period, and to be of those not copied into the book, have been preserved, and there is a sonnet beginning, *S' el bello aspetto non mi fosse tolto*, "If the fair aspect were not from me taken," which may have been written during this absence from Beatrice. The poet tells us in it that, being absent from the desire of his eyes, he is so stripped of every comfort, that everything wherein others find pleasure is to him a source of pain.

XII.

Fili mi, tempus est ut prætermittantur simulata nostra. "My son, it is time that our feignings be given over."

Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiæ partes; tu autem non sic. "I am as the centre of a circle, to which the parts of the circumference bear an equal relation; but thou art not so." On this dark saying Mr. Rossetti has the following ingenious note: —

"This phrase seems to have remained as obscure to commentators as Dante found it at the moment. No one, as far as I know, has even fairly tried to find a meaning for it. To me the following appears a not unlikely one. Love is weeping on Dante's account, and not on his own. He says, 'I am the centre of a circle' (*Amor che muove il sole e le altre cose*); 'therefore all lovable objects, whether in heaven or earth, or any part of the circle's circumference, are equally near to me. Not so thou, who wilt one day lose Beatrice when she goes to heaven.' The phrase would thus contain an intimation of the death of Beatrice, accounting for Dante being next told not to inquire the meaning of the speech, 'Demand no more than may be useful to thee.'"

Take care to adorn them with sweet harmony. Whether this direction refers simply to the structure of the verse, or whether it refers to the musical notes to which the ballad was to be sung, is not plain. It is certain that these poetic compositions, canzoni, sonnets, and ballads, were, as their names imply, often, perhaps commonly, intended to be accompanied by and sung to music.

All readers of the *Divine Comedy* remember the passage in the Purgatory when Dante, having met his friend Casella, asks him to sing to him, and Casella complies, singing one of the most beautiful of Dante's own *canzoni*, the second of the *Convito*. I cite from Mr. Longfellow's translation: —

"And I: 'If some new law take not from thee
Memory or practice of the song of love,
Which used to quiet me in all my longings,
Thee may it please to comfort therewithal
Somewhat this soul of mine, that with its body
Hitherward coming is so much distressed.'
'*Love, that within my mind discourses with me,*'
Forthwith began he so melodiously,
The melody within me still is sounding.
My master, and myself, and all that people
Which with him were, appeared as satisfied
As if naught else might touch the mind of any.
We all of us were moveless and attentive
Unto his notes."

Purgatory, II. 106–119.

In the *De Vulgari Eloquio*, II. 3, Dante, speaking of the superior excellence of the Canzone over all other forms of poetry in the vulgar tongue, says, in words not altogether plain, "Sed cantiones per se totum quod debent, efficiunt, quod ballatæ non faciunt

(indigent enim plausoribus ad quos editæ sunt)"; which Trissino translates as follows: "Ma le canzoni fanno per se stesse tutto quello che denno; il che le ballate non fanno, perciò che hanno bisogno di sonatori, ai quali sono fatte"; and this translation may in turn be rendered as follows: "But canzoni are complete in themselves; which ballads are not, for they require musicians for whom they are composed." But this translation gives to the word *plausores* a very unusual, if not an unexampled meaning; and if it be accepted as correct, the statement seems to exclude canzoni from the list of poems to be sung, which we know is incorrect. As ballads were written to be sung by dancers, perhaps the sense of the words is as follows: "Canzoni are complete in themselves, which ballads are not, for they require the dancers for whom they are composed." If this be the right interpretation, Dante may possibly have been led into using *plausor* with this equally unexampled sense, from recalling the line, *Æneid*, VI. 644:—

"Pars pedibus plaudunt choreas, at carmina dicunt";

thus translated by Mr. Conington:—

"Some ply the dance with eager feet,
And chant responsive to its beat."

Virgil's line is a translation from the *Odyssey*, VIII. 264:—

"πέπληγον δὲ χορὸν θεῖον ποσίν."

Boccaccio tells us that in his youth Dante took great delight in music, and was the friend of all the best musicians and singers of the time. It is plain from his poem that his genius was essentially musical, and it is certain that his delight in music continued through his life.

I intend to solve .... this doubt .... in a more difficult passage,—namely, in Section XXV.

XIII.

Nomina sunt consequentia rerum. "Names are consequent on things."

XIV.

They were met together here to attend a gentlewoman who was married that day. It has been supposed by some commentators on this passage, that the marriage thus referred to was that of Beatrice herself; but this seems

hardly probable. Beatrice was married some time before January, 1287, for the will of her father, which is dated on the 15th of that month, contains the following clause: *Item: Dominæ Bici filiæ suæ et uxori Domini Simonis de Bardis reliquit libr.* 50 *ad floren,* — "Item: To Mistress Bice his daughter, wife of Master Simon de' Bardi, he bequeatheth fifty florins." In the spring of 1290, Beatrice died. In 1291, before the conclusion of the book of *The New Life,* Dante himself was married to Gemma dei Donati.

It shows how completely Dante's inner life was that of the imagination, that there is no reference in any of his works to the marriage of Beatrice, or to his own, — no mention of his wife, or of his children. The fact that Beatrice was married changed in no respect the feeling with which he regarded her. His love was of no low quality, to be changed by earthly circumstance. It was an ideal love; a passion of the spirit.

There are stories that Dante was unhappy with his wife; but they start with Boccaccio, who was one of the idlest of gossips. He insinuates more than he asserts concerning their domestic infelicity, and concludes a vague declamation about the miseries of married life with the words, "Truly, I do not affirm that these things happened to Dante, for *I do not know.*" One thing is known, however, which deserves remembrance, — that when, after some years, a daughter was born to Dante, the name which she received was Beatrice.

The whole of this passage of *The New Life,* like many others, is full of the intense and exaggerated expressions of the passionate feeling of youth. As yet his emotion overmasters the lover and poet, but his defeats are discipline, and out of sorrow comes strength, each new trial helping him toward that complete self-possession which he finally attained, and which he displays in the *Divine Comedy.* It is not unlikely that Beatrice was already married at the time of this wedding festival; and this is, indeed, to be inferred from the fact of her presence at the marriage feast, if it be true, as Balbo asserts, that only married women were wont to take part on such occasions. It seems to me that in the poems of this portion of the *Vita Nuova* there is a tone of melancholy not wholly explained by the circumstances set forth in the book itself, and such as might arise in the poet's heart from the thought of the barrier set up between himself and Beatrice by her marriage. In this view the character of the circumstances narrated receives a new significance, and one reads, as it were, between the written lines, the real story which they obscurely reveal. Sections XIII. to XVIII. may belong to this time of grief. With the canzone, "Ladies that have intelligence of Love," a new spirit begins to be felt. The spiritual essence and immortal quality of his love asserts itself, and

he begins that series of praises of his lady which was to exalt her in life and death, for time and for eternity, as no other woman was ever exalted.

I leaned against a painting which ran around the wall of this house. This is one of the earliest references in modern literature to the use of painting in the decoration of a private dwelling. It was a recent application of the art, which had, in the earlier period of the revival, been almost confined to churches or religious houses.

XIX.

Ladies that have intelligence of Love. This is one of the most beautiful minor poems of Dante, and would seem to have been justly prized by him; for when he meets with Bonaggiunta da Lucca, who had been a writer of verses of the old style, he represents himself as addressed by him: —

"But say if him I here behold, who forth
Evoked the new-invented rhymes, beginning,
'*Ladies, that have intelligence of Love*'?"
Purgatory, XXIV. 49–51.

"*And who shall say in hell to the foredoomed,*
'*I have beheld the hope of those in bliss.*'"

The passage of which these lines are the close has sometimes been interpreted as containing a hint of the *Divina Commedia*. But it seems improbable that the conception of the great poem was formed in Dante's mind at the time to which this canzone is assigned, and hardly less improbable that these lines were inserted in the canzone at a later date, when the project of the *Divina Commedia* was now complete.

If Dante had not written the *Divina Commedia*, these words would awaken no suspicion of a double meaning, and the simple interpretation of which they are susceptible would then appear sufficient. They would be taken to mean that the youthful poet, in the exaltation of his passion, and the exaggeration of his humility, feeling the infinite distance between the perfection of his beloved and his own sinfulness, and acknowledging the separation that such difference would create between himself and her in the eternal world, set her where she belonged in highest heaven, but doomed himself to hell, foreseeing that even there he should retain the joy of remembering that he had beheld the hope of those in bliss.

XX.

Thinking that after such a treatise it were beautiful to treat somewhat of Love.

Dante calls his canzone a *trattato*, inasmuch as he had *treated* in it of his lady; and after discourse of her, he turned naturally to discourse of love.

> "*Love is but one thing with the gentle heart,*
> *As in the saying of the sage we find.*"

The sage whose saying is thus referred to was doubtless Dante's poetic forerunner, Guido Guinicelli. It was not uncommon to give the title of sage to a poet.

> "Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage,"

says Dante to Virgil in the first canto of the *Inferno* (v. 89); and so again in the seventh canto (v. 3) he says,

> "And that benignant Sage who all things knew."

Guido Guinicelli begins one of his canzoni thus: —

> "Unto the gentle heart Love aye repairs
> Like as a bird unto the greenwood's shade;
> Love was not truly ere the gentle heart,
> Nor gentle heart ere love by nature made."

The question what Love is was one which occupied much the Florentine poets of the trecento. Guido Cavalcanti wrote a famous and obscure canzone on the theme, and all the host of lesser rhymesters occupied their ingenuity, rather than their imagination, in trying to define the subtile essence of that which is in its nature incapable of literal definition.

It is delightful to find this reference to Guido Guinicelli in Dante's sonnet, and thus to connect the feeling of his youth with that of his mature years, when he spoke of Guido Guinicelli as

> "Father
> Of me and of my betters, who had ever
> Practised the sweet and gracious rhymes of love."

And when Guido says,

> "Tell me what is the cause why thou displayest
> In word and look that dear thou holdest me?"

he replies,

> "Those dulcet lays of yours
> Which, long as shall endure our modern fashion,
> Shall make forever dear their very ink."
>
> *Purgatory*, XXVI. 91–114.

The following sonnet is one of these "dulcet lays," and is one of Guido's just claims to the title of Father of those who

> "Practised the sweet and gracious rhymes of love."

I cite it in Mr. Rossetti's free and poetic version: —

> "Yea, let me praise my lady whom I love,
> Likening her unto the lily and rose:
> Brighter than morning star her visage glows;
> She is beneath even as her Saint above:
> She is as the air in summer which God wove
> Of purple and of vermilion glorious;
> As gold and jewels richer than man knows.
> Love's self, being love for her, must holier prove.
> Ever as she walks she hath a sober grace,
> Making bold men abashed and good men glad;
> If she delight thee not, thy heart must err.
> No man dare look on her, his thoughts being base:
> Nay, let me say even more than I have said; —
> No man could think base thoughts who look'd on her."
>
> *The Early Italian Poets*, p. 27.

Guinicelli died in 1276, when Dante was eleven years old.

XXII.

He who had been the begetter of such a marvel as that most noble Beatrice was seen to be, departing from this life.

Folco Portinari, the father of Beatrice, died on the 31st of December, 1289. He was a man of repute and wealth, and his name is still honored in Florence as that of the founder of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova.

"The Allighieri," says Fraticelli, "dwelt not more than fifty paces from the Portinari; for the houses of the latter stood where the Ricciardi palace now stands, on the street of the Corso, near the Canto de' Pazzi, while the former lived on the Piazza of San Martino, just on the corner of the street which leads to Santa Margherita." The scene of the narrative which follows in the text is thus localized.

And I made two sonnets. There are also two sonnets in the *Canzoniere* on the same theme with those in the text. But I incline to believe, from their resemblance to the two inserted in *The New Life*, and from their inferiority to them, that they may be the work of an imitator of Dante. They stand as numbers XLVI. and XLVII.

XXIII.

These angels sang gloriously, and the words of their song it seemed to me were these: "Osanna in excelsis!"

In the *Divine Comedy* Dante frequently speaks of angels singing Hosanna: —

"Even as thine own Angels of their will
Make sacrifice to thee, Hosanna singing,
So may all men make sacrifice of theirs."
Purgatory, XI. 10.

So in the eighth canto of the *Paradiso* he says: —

"And as within a flame a spark is seen,
And as within a voice a voice discerned,
When one is steadfast, and one comes and goes,
Within that light beheld I other lamps
Move in a circle, speeding more and less,
Methinks in measure of their inward vision.
. . . . .
And behind those that most in front appeared
Sounded '*Osanna!*' so that never since
To hear again was I without desire."
vv. 16–30, *Longfellow's Transl.*

See also *Purgatorio*, XXIX. 51; *Paradiso*, VII. 1; XXVIII. 94, 118; XXXII. 135.

XXIV.

The lady of my first friend. The name of the lady of Guido Cavalcanti was Giovanna, or Joan; but because of her beauty the name of *Primavera*, that is, "Spring," had been given to her; and as the freshness of spring precedes the full beauty of summer, so Joan was the forerunner of Beatrice, even as John had been the forerunner of the Light of the World.

Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Matthew iii. 3.

XXV.

According to the philosopher. That is, Aristotle.

To explain this matter so far as is meet for the present occasion, it must first be understood that formerly there were no rhymers of Love in the vulgar tongue, but certain poets in the Latin tongue were rhymers of Love; among us, I mean, although perchance among other people it may have happened, and although furthermore, as in Greece, not the vulgar, but the lettered poets treated of these things.

The close of this passage is obscure, and the text may possibly be corrupt. I have translated literally, without attempting to turn the translation into an interpretation.

Mr. Rossetti translates as follows: "I mean, among us, although perchance the same may have been among others, and although likewise, as among the Greeks, they were not writers of spoken language, but men of letters treated of these things."

In the tongue of the oco *and in the tongue of the* sì. That is, in the languages of Provence, or Languedoc, and of Tuscany. In his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquio*, Dante, speaking of the varieties of language in Europe, says: "From one and the same idiom sprang divers vulgar tongues, for all that tract which extends from the mouth of the Danube, or Lake Mæotis, to the borders of the West, which are defined by the boundaries of England, Italy, and France, and by the ocean, was occupied by one sole idiom, though afterwards it was diverted into different vulgar tongues by the Slavonians, Hungarians, Germans, Saxons, English, and other nations as many as there were; this alone remaining in almost all as a sign of common origin, that nearly all of them use

Jo [Ya] in affirmation. Beginning from this idiom, namely from the limits of the Hungarians on the East, another idiom occupied the whole of what is called Europe on that side, and even stretched beyond. But all that remains of Europe outside of these two was occupied by a third idiom, which yet may seem to be threefold. For some say *Oc*, others *Oil*, others *Sì*, in affirmation, as, for instance, the Spaniards, the French, and the Italians. . . . . Those that use *Oc* occupy the western part of Southern Europe, beginning from the confines of Genoa. Those that say *Sì* occupy the region east of these limits, namely, as far as that promontory of Italy from which the gulf of the Adriatic Sea begins, and Sicily. But those that use *Oil* are somewhat to the north of these, for on the east and north they have the Germans, on the west they are walled in by the English Sea, and bounded by the mountains of Aragon, and on the south also they are shut in by the Provençals and by the curve of the Apennines." (Lib. I. c. 8.)

In the thirty-third canto of the *Inferno* the poet defines Italy as

"That fair land wherein the *sì* doth sound."

Æole, namque tibi, etc. Æneid, I. 65: "Eolus, for to thee the father of gods and king of men gave both to soothe and raise the waves with wind."

Tuus, O regina, quid optes, etc. Id., 76: "Thine is the task, O queen, to see well what thou askest."

Dardanidæ duri, etc. Æneid, III. 94: "Ye hardy Trojans, the land which first bore you shall receive you, returning, on its glad bosom." This was the voice of an oracle.

Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis. Pharsalia, I. 44: —

"Much dost thou owe, O Rome, to civic arms."

Dic mihi, Musa, virum, etc. De Arte Poetica, 141. This is Horace's translation of the opening lines of the *Odyssey*. "Tell to me, Muse, of the man, who, after the walls of Troy had fallen, beheld the cities and the manners of many men."

Bella mihi video, bella parantur, ait. Remedium Amoris, v. 2: —

"Wars against me, I see, wars are preparing, he said."

And my first friend and I are well acquainted with those who rhyme thus foolishly. The digression which thus concludes with a reference to Guido Cavalcanti that shows the sympathy existing between him and Dante, is an illustration of the infancy of the new literature, and the poverty of intellectual culture at the time when the *Vita Nuova* was written. It shows how little familiarity those into whose hands the book was likely to fall were expected to possess with the common forms of poetry, and the methods of poetic expression. It indicates also something of the range of Dante's reading. Virgil was already his master and

poet, and the four other poets to whom in this digression he refers reappear in company in the *Divine Comedy:* —

"In the mean time a voice was heard by me:
'All honor be to the pre-eminent poet,
His shade returns again that was departed.'
After the voice had ceased and quiet was,
Four mighty shades I saw approaching us;
Semblance had they nor sorrowful nor glad.
To say to me began my gracious Master:
'Him with that falchion in his hand behold;
Who comes before the three, even as their lord.
That one is Homer, poet sovereign;
He who comes next is Horace, the satirist;
The third is Ovid, and the last is Lucan.'"

The contrast between such powerfully imaginative poetry as the magnificent and living scene of which these lines form part, and a passage like this literal statement in the *Vita Nuova* concerning poetic usage and diction, is so strong, that there would be difficulty in harmonizing the two as the work of one man, were it not for the fact that besides the growth of art and imagination from boyhood to manhood in Dante himself, there was in these years an almost corresponding growth in the literary sense of the public of Italian readers. The air of Florence was most genial to art and to letters during this period, and each occupied a degree of attention and interest rarely accorded to either in any country. Dante was himself in large measure the source of the pervading spirit to which he gave the fullest expression, and of which he felt the reflex influence acting to quicken and confirm his individual genius. He was not only poet, but, as this passage shows, critic also; and, indeed, this passage is the first essay of modern criticism. In him the poetic and critical faculties were so balanced and proportioned, that each, as it developed, promoted the full and just play of the other.

The direct literary impulse which Dante gave was at once very great, — was soon to become unparalleled. But his commentators in the century after his death often seem to have caught the formal literalism of this youthful passage on poetic diction, and to have joined with it a fantastic pedantry, in their discourse upon the most poetic of poems. Even Boccaccio displays thus the literary juvenility of his time.

As this passage stands in the *Vita Nuova* it is in marked contrast with the pages which immediately follow, pages as tender, sweet, and simple as were ever written.

XXVI., XXVII.

The beauty of these sections is so great, and this portion of the *Vita Nuova* is so famous, that I give here, as supplementary of my own, two recent versions of it, — that of Mr. Rossetti and that of Mr. Martin.

From "The Early Italian Poets." By D. G. Rossetti. Part II. London, 1861.

"This excellent lady of whom I spake in what hath gone before, came at last into such favor with all men, that when she passed anywhere folk ran to behold her; which thing was a deep joy to me; and when she drew near unto any, so much truth and simpleness entered into his heart, that he dared neither to lift his eyes, nor to return her salutation; and unto this many who have felt it can bear witness. She went along crowned and clothed with humility, showing no whit of pride in all that she heard and saw; and when she had gone by, it was said of many, 'This is not a woman, but one of the beautiful angels of Heaven'; and there were some that said, 'This is surely a miracle; blessed be the Lord who hath power to work thus marvellously.' I say, of very sooth, that she showed herself so gentle and so full of all perfection, that she bred in those who looked upon her a soothing quiet beyond any speech, neither could any look upon her without sighing immediately. These things, and things yet more wonderful, were brought to pass by her miraculous virtue. Wherefore I, considering thereof, and wishing to resume the endless tale of her praises, resolved to write somewhat wherein I might dwell on her surpassing influence, to the end that not only they who had beheld her, but others also, might know as much concerning her as words could give to the understanding. And it was then that I wrote this sonnet: —

'My lady looks so gentle and so pure
When yielding salutation by the way,
That the tongue trembles, and has naught to say,
And the eyes which fain would see may not endure.
And still, amid the praise she hears secure
She walks with humbleness for her array;
Seeming a creature sent from Heaven to stay
On earth, and show a miracle made sure.
She is so pleasant in the eyes of men
That through the sight the inmost heart doth gain
A sweetness which needs proof to know it by;
And from between her lips there seems to move
A soothing spirit that is full of love,
Saying forever to the soul, "O sigh!"'

"This sonnet is so easy to understand from what is afore narrated, that it needs no division; and therefore, leaving it, I say also, that this excellent lady came into such favor with all men, that not only she herself was honored and commended, but, through her companionship, honor and commendation came unto others. Wherefore I, perceiving this, and wishing that it should also be made manifest to those that beheld it not, wrote the sonnet here following, wherein is signified the power which her virtue had upon other ladies: —

'For certain he hath seen all perfectness
Who among other ladies hath seen mine:
They that go with her humbly should combine
To thank their God for such peculiar grace.
So perfect is the beauty of her face
That it begets in no wise any sign
Of envy, but draws round her a clear line

Of love, and blessed faith, and gentleness.
Merely the sight of her makes all things bow;
Not she herself alone is holier
Than all; but hers, through her, are raised above.
From all her acts such lovely graces flow
That truly one may never think of her
Without a passion of exceeding love.' "

From "The Vita Nuova" of Dante. Translated by THEODORE MARTIN. London, 1862.

"That most gentle lady of whom I have before spoken became an object of so much interest, that, as she passed along the street, people ran to catch a sight of her, — a circumstance which gave me wonderful delight; and when she drew near to any one, a feeling of reverence so profound came over his heart, that he had not courage to raise his eyes, nor to return her salute; and of this many could bear witness from their own experience to such as may be incredulous. But she, crowned and clothed with humility, pursued her way, testifying no triumph in the admiration which she saw and heard around her. Many exclaimed as she went by, 'This is not a woman, but one of the fairest of Heaven's angels!' others, 'Behold, a miracle! Blessed be the Lord in that he hath wrought so marvellously!' I say, her demeanor was so full of grace and dignity and every charm, that, looking upon her, men felt within them an emotion of inexpressible sweetness and elevation; nor was it possible for any one to look upon her without a sigh first rising from his breast. These and even more marvellous effects were wrought by her in a manner at once most strange and admirable; much meditating whereon, and wishing to resume my verses in her praise, I determined to express in words something of her wondrous and excelling influence, in order that not only those who had beheld her in the flesh, but others, might know what of her fair proportions might be conveyed in words. Thereupon I composed this sonnet: —

'So kind, so full of gentle courtesy
My lady's greeting is, that every tongue
To silence thrills, and eyes, that on her hung
With mute observance, dare no more to see.
Onwards she moves clothed with humility,
Hearing, with look benign, her praises rung;
A being, seeming sent from heaven among
Mankind, to show what heavenly wonders be.
Within her looks such stores of pleasaunce lie,
That through the gazer's eye creeps to his heart
A sweetness must be tasted to be known;
And from his lips, with love in every tone,
A spirit soft and gentle seems to part,
Which to the soul keeps ever saying, —
"Die!" '*

"*This sonnet is so easy to understand by what has been already said, that no division is requisite, and therefore, leaving it, I say:* —

"This lady of my heart came to be so highly esteemed, that not only was she honored and praised, but many were honored and praised for her sake. Wherefore, seeing this, and being anxious to make it known to those who

* There is no reading of the original, so far as I am aware, which gives authority for this rendering. I suspect "Die" to be a misprint for "Sigh."

did not see it, I determined to write something in which it should be expressed. The following sonnet was the result, which tells how her influence extended itself over other ladies: —

'He fully sees her matchless worth, who sees
That lady mine with other ladies round;
They whom she chooses for her mates are bound
To render thanks to Heaven with grateful knees.
Such virtue rare her beauty hath, in sooth,
No envy stirs in other ladies' breast,
But in its light they walk beside her, dress'd
In gentleness, and love, and noble truth.
Her looks whate'er they light on seem to bless,
Nor her alone make lovely to the view,
But all her peers through her have honor too:
In all she does such courtly gentleness,
None can recall her worth without a sigh
Of love, oppress'd with that sweet memory.'"

This portion of the *Vita Nuova* belongs to the year 1289, and the contrast between the tender sweetness and serenity of these poems, and the character of the events of the period at which they were written, is complete. It was in this year that Count Ugolino and his sons and grandsons were starved by the Pisans in their tower prison. A few months later in the same year, Francesca da Rimini was murdered by her husband. Between the dates of these two cruel deeds the Florentines had won the victory of Campaldino over their Ghibelline enemies; and thus, in this short space, the materials had been given to the poet for the two best known and most powerful narratives and for one of the most striking episodes of the *Divina Commedia*.

In the great and hard-fought battle of Campaldino, Dante himself took part. "I was at first greatly afraid," he says, in a letter of which but a few sentences have been preserved in Lionardo Aretino's life of the poet,— "but at the end I felt the greatest joy, — according to the various chances of the battle." When the victorious army returned to Florence, a splendid procession, with the clergy at its head, with the arts of the city each under its banner, and with all manner of pomp, went out to meet it. There were long-continued feasts and rejoicings. The battle had been fought on the 11th of June, the day of St. Barnabas, and the Republic, though already engaged in magnificent works of church-building, decreed that a new church should be erected in honor of the Saint on whose day the victory had been won.

A little later in that summer, Dante was one of a troop of Florentines who joined the forces of Lucca in levying war upon the Pisan territory. The stronghold of Caprona was taken, and Dante was present at its capture; for he says, "I saw the foot-soldiers, who, having made terms, came out from Caprona, afraid when they beheld them-

selves among so many enemies." (*Inferno*, XXI. 94–96.)

Thus, during a great part of the summer of 1289, Dante was in active service as a soldier. He was no lovesick idler, but was already taking his part in the affairs of the state which he was afterwards to be called on for a time to assist in governing, and he was laying up those stores of experience which were to serve as the material out of which his vivifying imagination was to form the great national poem of Italy. But of this active life, of these personal engagements, of these terrible events which took such strong possession of his soul, there is no word, no suggestion even, in the book of his New Life. In it there is no echo, however faint, of those storms of public violence and private passion which broke dark over Italy. In the midst of the tumults which sprang from the jealousies of rival states, from the internal discords of cities, from the divisions of parties, from the bitterness of domestic quarrels, — the current of Dante's love flowed deep and still, reflecting only the clouds or the sun shine that were within his heart, unruffled by the winds of earth. The story of *The New Life* is a narrative of absorbing personal emotions, told as if the world were the abode of tenderness and peace. No external excitements could break into the inner chambers of Dante's heart to disturb the love that dwelt within them. Every man in some sort leads a double life, — one real and his own, the other seeming and the world's, — but with few is the separation so entire as it was with Dante.

But in these troubled times the first part of his New Life was drawing to its close.

XXIX.

Quomodo sedet sola civitas, etc. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations." *Lamentations* i. 1. With the same verse from *Lamentations*, Dante began the letter which he addressed to the Italian Cardinals in 1314, on occasion of the election of a papal successor to Clement V., lamenting the desertion of Rome by the head of the Church, upbraiding the prelates by whom the interests of the fold of Christ were abandoned, and exhorting the Italian Cardinals to stand firm for the good of the Church and of Italy.

It is no part of the present design, if we consider the proem which precedes this little book. The words which it was his intention to copy into this little book were those only which related to his own *New Life*.

In so doing, it would be needful for me to praise myself. What circumstance or action Dante may refer to in these words is wholly unknown.

The number nine. The importance which Dante attributes to the relation of the number nine to Beatrice is no indication of puerility or poverty of feeling, but gives evidence of the sensitiveness of his imagination to the impressions of a popular superstition, which rested on a basis of natural but unexplained fact. The exalted explanations which his fancy invented to account for the friendliness of this celestial number to Beatrice, were the simple expression of a condition of passionate feeling to which exaggeration is impossible, and in which the extravagances of fancy seem more true than the literal witness of fact.

The mysterious and mystical properties and relations of numbers were in Dante's time a subject of serious study, and held in regard to mathematics proper something the same relation as alchemy held towards chemistry.

Cornelius Agrippa, in his book on Occult Philosophy, says on this subject: "Themistius truly, and Boethius, and Averroes the Arabian, together with Plato, so exalt numbers, that they deem no one able without them to philosophize rightly. They speak, indeed, of rational and formal number, not of the material, sensible, or spoken number used by traders. . . . . But they direct their attention to the proportion resulting from the latter, which they call natural, formal, and rational number, and from which great mysteries (*sacramenta*) proceed, alike in natural and in divine and celestial affairs. . . . . That great efficacy and power, for good and for bad, lies hid in numbers, not only the most illustrious philosophers unanimously teach, but also the Catholic Doctors." (*De Occulta Philosophia*, Lib. II. cc. 2, 3.)

Sir Thomas Browne's *Garden of Cyrus* is a good comparatively modern instance of the speculations of a fanciful and contemplative mind concerning the mysteries and secrets of number. The number five is the one whose properties he sets forth.

XXX.

The perfect number. According to Pythagoras, ten was the perfect number, and this was the common opinion of the schoolmen.

It appears, then, that Beatrice died on the 9th of June, 1290. She was a little more than twenty-four years old.

Since, according to Ptolemy and according to the Christian truth, there are nine heavens which move. By the

Christian truth Dante means, not a dogma of religion, but a belief derived from some of those teachers whom the Church generally regarded as authorities. In the *Convito*, II. 3, he says: "I say then that there are many diverse opinions concerning the number and site of the heavens, although the truth has at last been found. . . . . According to him (Ptolemy), and according to what is established in Astronomy and Philosophy, the movable heavens are nine."

Since three is the factor by itself of nine, and the Author of miracles by himself is three. In the Italian the same word, *fattore*, serves both for "factor" and "author." The play on the word is characteristic.

XXXII.

No quality of cold 't was took her there,
Nor yet of heat.

Disease and death were supposed to result from excess of the principle of cold or of heat in the system.

Nor is there villain heart with wit so high
It can imagine aught concerning her;
Wherefore to it there comes no wish to weep.

It is only the evil-disposed who do not weep for her, and they weep not, because they are powerless to conceive aught of her.

XXXIII.

There came to me one who . . . . was my friend next in order after the first; and he was so near in blood to this lady in glory that there was none nearer. This friend of the poet would seem from these words to have been the brother of Beatrice. "Is there not," says Mr. Martin, "an indication peculiarly touching of the feeling with which this brother regarded Dante's devotion to his sister, in the request that he would write something for him 'on a lady who had died some time before,' when he must have known well that there was only one such theme on which Dante could write, but that the execution of such a task might bring some measure of healing to the poet in his desolation?" (*The Vita Nuova of Dante translated*, Introduction, p. xxiv.)

Among the sonnets ascribed to Dante is one which, if it be his, must have been written about this time, and which, although not included in the

Vita Nuova, is perhaps not unworthy to find a place here. Its imagery, at least, connects it with some of the sonnets in the earlier portion of the book.

One day came Melancholy unto me,
And said, "With thee I will awhile abide";
And, as it seemed, attending at her side,
Anger and Grief did bear her company.

"Depart! Away!" I cried out eagerly;
Then like a Greek she unto me replied;
And while she stood discoursing in her pride,
I looked, and Love approaching us I see.
In cloth of black full strangely was he clad,
A little hood he wore upon his head,
And down his face tears flowing fast he had.
"Poor little wretch! what aileth thee?" I said.
And he replied, "I woful am, and sad,
Sweet brother, for our lady who is dead."

XXXIV.

And unto her turned all of my desires. Death is personified in female form here as in other parts of this little book.

XXXV.

On that day on which the year was complete since this lady was made one of the denizens of life eternal. The 9th of June, 1291.

I was drawing an angel upon certain tablets. This is an interesting illustration of the personal tastes of Dante, and of his pursuits. "Dante was an excellent draughtsman," says Lionardo Aretino. In 1291 Giotto, who as an artist deserves to rank side by side with Dante as a poet, was, if we may believe tradition, but fifteen years old. The friendship which existed between him and Dante had its beginning at a later period. At this time Cimabue still held the field. This great artist often painted angels around the figures of the Virgin and her Child; and in his most famous picture, in the church of Santa Maria Novella, there are certain angels of which Vasari says, with truth, that, though painted in the Greek manner, they show an approach toward the modern style of drawing. These angels may well have seemed beautiful to eyes accustomed to the hard unnaturalness of earlier works. The love of Art pervaded Florence, and a nature so sensitive and so sympathetic as Dante's could not but partake of it in the fullest measure. Art was then no adjunct of sentimentalism, no encourager of idleness. It was connected with all that was most serious and all that was most delightful in life. It is difficult, indeed, to appreciate the earnestness with which painting, the latest of the arts to feel the breath of the revival,

was followed, or to realize the delight which it gave, when it seemed, as by a miracle, to fling off the winding-sheet that had long wrapped its stiffened limbs, and to come forth with new and unexampled life.

This angel drawn by Dante brings to mind the sculptured Angel which the poet saw in Purgatory.

"The Angel, who came down to earth with tidings
Of peace, that had been wept for many a year,
And opened Heaven from its long interdict,
In front of us appeared so truthfully
There sculptured in a gracious attitude,
He did not seem an image that is silent."
Canto X. 34–39.

To that calm heaven where Mary hath her home.

The original is,

Nel ciel dell' umiltate ov' è Maria.

The words *umiltà, umile, umiliare,* which recur often in this little book, seem to be used by Dante in a sense which implies "peace," "tranquillity," "calmness," such as is not rendered by our "humility, "humble," etc.

These words recur at intervals in *The New Life,* as if echoes of thought and feeling, and preserve with other words, such as *gentile, pace, amore, morte,* the harmony of its tone of expression.

That calm heaven where Mary dwells is the Empyrean, quieted by fulness of Love. Dante, *Convito,* II. 15, says: "The Empyrean Heaven by its peace resembles the Divine Science, which is full of all peace; and which suffers no strife of opinions or sophistical arguments, because of the exceeding certitude of its subject, which is God."

XXXVI. – XXXVIII.

The story in *The Vita Nuova* of the wandering of his eyes, and the short faithlessness of his heart, is retold by Dante with variations in the *Convito,* and in this later version there are some details which serve to fill out and illustrate the earlier narrative. The same tender and refined feeling which inspires the *Vita Nuova* gives its tone to the passages in which the poet recalls his youthful days and the memory of Beatrice in the work of his sorrowful manhood. In the midst of its serious and philosophic discourse, this little story winds in and out its thread of personal recollection and of sweet romantic sentiment. It affords new insight into the recesses of Dante's heart, and exhibits the permanence of the gracious qualities of his youth.

Its opening sentence is full of the imagery of love. "Since the death of that blessed Beatrice, who lives in heaven with the angels, and on earth with my soul, the star of Venus had twice shone in the different seasons as the star of morning and of evening, when that gentle lady, of whom I have made mention at the close of *The New Life,* first appeared before my eyes

accompanied by Love, and gained some place in my mind..... And before this new love could become perfect, there arose a great battle between the thought that sprang from it and that which was opposed to it, and which still held the fortress of my mind for the glorified Beatrice." (*Conv.*, II. 2.)

And so hard was this struggle, and so painful, that Dante took refuge from it in the composition of a poem addressed to the Angelic Intelligences who move the third heaven, that is, the heaven of Venus; and it is to the exposition of the true meaning of this canzone that the second book or treatise of the *Convito* is directed. In one of the later chapters he says (and the passage is a most striking one, from its own declaration, as well as from its relation to the vision of the *Divina Commedia*): "The life of my heart was wont to be a sweet thought, which often went to the feet of the Lord of those to whom I speak, that is, to God, — for, thinking, I contemplated the kingdom of the blessed. And I tell [in the canzone] the final cause of my mounting thither in thought, when I say, 'Where I beheld a lady in glory'; [and I say this] in order that it may be understood that I was certain, and am certain, through her gracious revelation, that she was in heaven, whither I, thinking oftentimes, according as was possible for me, went, as it were seized up. And the sweetness of this thought was such as to make me desirous of death, that I might go there where she was." (*Conv.*, II. 8.) Following upon the chapter in which this remarkable passage occurs is one which is chiefly occupied with a digression upon the immortality of the soul; and with discourse upon this matter, says Dante, "it will be beautiful to finish speaking of that living and blessed Beatrice, of whom I intend to say no more in this book..... And I believe and affirm and am certain that I shall pass after this to another and better life, in which that glorious lady liveth of whom my soul was enamored."

But it is not from the *Convito* alone that this portion of the *Vita Nuova* receives illustration. In that passage of the *Purgatory* in which Beatrice is described as appearing in person to her lover for the first time since her death, she addresses him in words of stern rebuke of his fickleness and his infidelity to her memory. The whole scene is, perhaps, unsurpassed in imaginative reality; the vision appears to have an actual existence, and the poet himself is subdued by the power of his own imagination. He tells the words of Beatrice with the same feeling with which he would have repeated them, had they fallen on his mortal ear. His grief and shame are real, and there is no element of feigning in them. That in truth he had seemed to himself to listen to and to behold what he tells, it is scarcely possible to doubt. Beatrice says: —

"As soon as ever of my second age
I was upon the threshold and changed life,
Himself from me he took and gave to others.
When from the flesh to spirit I ascended,

And beauty and virtue were in me increased,
I was to him less dear and less delightful;
And into ways untrue he turned his steps,
Pursuing the false images of good,
That never any promises fulfil;
Nor prayer for inspiration me availed,
By means of which in dreams and otherwise
I called him back, so little did he heed them.
So low he fell, that all appliances
For his salvation were already short,
Save showing him the people of perdition.
For this I visited the gates of death,
And unto him, who so far up has led him,
My intercessions were with weeping borne.
God's lofty fiat would be violated,
If Lethe should be passed, and if such viands
Should tasted be, withouten any scot
Of penitence, that gushes forth in tears."

Purg., XXX. 124–145, *Longfellow's Tr.*

Although Beatrice only gives utterance here to the self-reproaches of Dante, we have seen already how fully he had atoned for the transient unfaithfulness of his heart. The remainder of the *Vita Nuova* shows how little she had lost of her power over him, how reverently he honored her memory, how constant was his love of her whom he should never again see save in supersensual vision.

XXXIX.

And that it is fitting to call the appetite the heart, and the reason the soul is sufficiently plain to those to whom it pleaseth me that this should be disclosed. In the *Convito*, IV. 22, Dante says: "No one should say that every appetite is of the soul, for here by the soul is meant only that which belongs to the rational part, namely, the will and the intellect; so that, if one should choose to call the appetite of the senses the soul, he can have here no place nor room; for let no one doubt that the rational appetite is more noble than the sensual, and therefore more to be loved, and it is this of which we now speak."

XL.

There arose one day about the hour of nones. Here again Dante's fancy recurs to the number nine. The *nones* are the canonical offices of the ninth hour of the day. The sixth hour is noon.

In those crimson garments in which she had first appeared unto mine eyes. It will be remembered that Dante says (Sect. II.), that when he first saw Beatrice she was "clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson."

All my thoughts returned to their most gentle Beatrice. In the *Convito*, II. 13, Dante says: "I say that when

the first delight of my soul was lost to me, I remained pierced with such sadness that no comfort availed me. Nevertheless, after some time my mind which sought for healing proposed, since neither my own nor others' consoling availed it, to resort to that method by which others in grief had consoled themselves. And I set myself to read that book, but little known, of Boëthius, in which, in prison and exile, he had consoled himself. And hearing, likewise, that Tully had written a book, in which, treating of friendship, he had offered some words of comfort to Lælius, a most excellent man, on the death of Scipio, his friend, I set myself to read it. And although at first it was hard for me to enter into their meaning, I at length entered into it so far as my knowledge of language, and such little capacity as I had, enabled me; by means of which capacity, I had already, like one dreaming, seen many things, as may be seen in *The New Life.* And as it might happen that a man seeking silver should, beyond his expectation, find gold, which a hidden chance presents to him, not, perhaps, without Divine direction, so I, who sought for consolation, found not only a remedy for my tears, but also acquaintance with authors, with knowledge, and with books."

XLI.

The blessed image which Jesus Christ left to us as the likeness of his most beautiful countenance. The most precious relic at Rome, and the one which chiefly attracted pilgrims, during a long period of the Middle Ages, was the *Veronica,* or representation of the Saviour's face, supposed to have been miraculously impressed upon the kerchief with which he wiped his face on his way to Calvary. It is still preserved at St. Peter's, and shown each year on special occasions. It is referred to in the *Paradiso,* XXXI. 103–108: —

"As he who peradventure from Croatia
Cometh to gaze at our Veronica,
Who through its ancient fame is never sated,
But says in thought, the while it is displayed,
'My Lord, Christ Jesus, God of very God,
Now was your semblance made like unto this?'"

For an account of the Veronica see Mr. Longfellow's note on this passage.

Those who go to the House of Galicia are called pilgrims, *because the burial-place of St. James was more distant from his country than that of any other of the Apostles.*

Pilgrim, from *peregrinus,* "a foreigner," or "stranger."

The shrine of St. James, at Compostella (contracted from *Giacomo Apostolo*), in Galicia, was a great resort of pilgrims during the Middle Ages, —

and Santiago, the military patron of Spain, was one of the most popular saints of Christendom. The reader of the *Paradiso* will remember the lines (XXV. 16–18): —

"And then my Lady, full of ecstasy,
Said unto me: 'Look, look! behold the Baron
For whom below Galicia is frequented.'"

See Mr. Longfellow's note on this passage.

Chaucer says, the Wif of Bathe

"Had passed many a straunge streem;
At Rome sche hadde ben, and at Boloyne,
In Galice at Seynt Jame, and at Coloyne."

And Shakespeare, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, makes Helena present herself as "St. Jacques's pilgrim."

XLII.

And this the Philosopher sayeth in the second book of his Metaphysics. Karl Förster, in the Notes to his translation of the *Vita Nuova* (Leipzig, 1841), gives the following as the passage probably referred to by Dante. It is from the first chapter of the second book of Aristotle's Metaphysics. Ὥσπερ γὰρ καὶ τὰ τῶν νυκτερίδων ὄμματα πρὸς τὸ φέγγος ἔχει τὸ μεθ' ἡμέραν, οὕτω καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὰ τῇ φύσει φανερώτατα πάντων, — "As the eyes of bats to the daylight, so is our understanding to the clearest things in nature."

Beyond the sphere that widest orbit hath
Passeth the sigh that issues from my heart."

That is, to the motionless Empyrean.

He sees her such that his reporting words
To me are dark.

When Dante is himself uplifted to the Empyrean, his vision is at first dim with excess of light, and he comprehends not what he beholds: —

"Not that these things are difficult in themselves,
But the deficiency is on thy side,
For yet thou hast not vision so exalted."
Paradiso, XXX. 79–81.

XLIII.

And then may it please Him who is the Lord of Grace, that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that blessed Beatrice, who in glory looketh upon the face of Him qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus, — "of him who is blessed for ever and ever."

The pages of *The New Life* fitly close with words of that life in which all things shall be made new, "and

there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

The hope of Dante was fulfilled, and the *Divine Comedy* is its realization.

The only needed comment on the words with which *The New Life* ends are the following passages from the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*.

"Thus in the bosom of a cloud of flowers
Which from those hands angelical ascended,
And downward fell again inside and out,
Over her snow-white veil with olive cinct
Appeared a lady under a green mantle,
Vested in color of the living flame.
And my own spirit, which already now
So long a time had been, that in her presence
Trembling with awe it had not stood abashed,
Without more knowledge having by mine eyes,
Through occult virtue that from her proceeded
Of ancient love the mighty influence felt.
As soon as on my vision smote the power
Sublime, that had already pierced me through
Ere from my boyhood I had yet come forth,
To the left hand I turned with that reliance
With which the little child runs to his mother,
When he has fear, or when he is afflicted,
To say unto Virgilius: 'Not a drachm
Of blood remains in me, that does not tremble;
I know the traces of the ancient flame.'
But us Virgilius of himself deprived
Had left, Virgilius, sweetest of all fathers,
Virgilius, to whom I for safety gave me:
Nor whatsoever lost the ancient mother
Availed my cheeks now purified from dew,
That weeping they should not again be darkened.
'Dante, because Virgilius has departed
Do not weep yet, do not weep yet awhile;
For by another sword thou need'st must weep.'
E'en as an admiral, who on poop and prow
Comes to behold the people that are working
In other ships, and cheers them to well-doing,
Upon the left hand border of the car,
When at the sound I turned of my own name,
Which of necessity is here recorded,
I saw the Lady, who erewhile appeared
Veiled underneath the angelic festival,
Direct her eyes to me across the river.
Although the veil, that from her head descended,
Encircled with the foliage of Minerva,
Did not permit her to appear distinctly,
In attitude still royally majestic
Continued she, like unto one who speaks,
And keeps his warmest utterance in reserve:
'Look at me well; in sooth I 'm Beatrice!
How didst thou deign to come unto the Mountain?
Didst thou not know that man is happy here?'
Mine eyes fell downward into the clear fountain,
But, seeing myself therein, I sought the grass,
So great a shame did weigh my forehead down.
As to the son the mother seems superb,
So she appeared to me; for somewhat bitter
Tasteth the savor of severe compassion.
Silent became she, and the Angels sang
Suddenly, '*In te, Domine, speravi*':
But beyond *pedes meos* did not pass.
Even as the snow among the living rafters
Upon the back of Italy congeals,
Blown on and drifted by Sclavonian winds,
And then, dissolving, trickles through itself
Whene'er the land that loses shadow breathes,
So that it seems a fire that melts a taper;
E'en thus was I without a tear or sigh,
Before the song of those who sing forever
After the music of the eternal spheres.
But when I heard in their sweet melodies
Compassion for me, more than had they said,
'O wherefore, lady, dost thou thus upbraid him?'
The ice, that was about my heart congealed,
To air and water changed, and in my anguish
Through mouth and eyes came gushing from my breast.
She, on the right-hand border of the car
Still firmly standing, to those holy beings
Thus her discourse directed afterwards:
'Ye keep your watch in the eternal day,
So that nor night nor sleep can steal from you

One step the ages make upon their path;
Therefore my answer is with greater care,
That he may hear me who is weeping yonder,
So that the sin and dole be of one measure.
Not only by the work of those great wheels,
That destine every seed unto some end,
According as the stars are in conjunction,
But by the largess of celestial graces,
Which have such lofty vapors for their rain
That near to them our sight approaches not,
Such had this man become in his new life
Potentially, that every righteous habit
Would have made admirable proof in him;
But so much more malignant and more savage
Becomes the land untilled and with bad seed,
The more good earthly vigor it possesses.
Some time did I sustain him with my look;
Revealing unto him my youthful eyes,
I led him with me turned in the right way.
As soon as ever of my second age
I was upon the threshold and changed life,
Himself he took from me and gave to others.
When from the flesh to spirit I ascended,
And beauty and virtue were in me increased,
I was to him less dear and less delightful;
And into ways untrue he turned his steps,
Pursuing the false images of good,
That never any promises fulfil;
Nor prayer for inspiration me availed,
By means of which in dreams and otherwise
I called him back, so little did he heed them.
So low he fell, that all appliances
For his salvation were already short,
Save showing him the people of perdition.
For this I visited the gates of death,
And unto him, who so far up has led him,
My intercessions were with weeping borne.
God's lofty fiat would be violated,
If Lethe should be passed, and if such viands
Should tasted be, withouten any scot
Of penitence, that gushes forth in tears."

Purgatorio, XXX. 28–145.

"Whereat to turn mine eyes on Beatrice
My seeing nothing and my love constrained me.
If what has hitherto been said of her
Were all concluded in a single praise,
Scant would it be to serve the present turn
Not only does the beauty I beheld
Transcend ourselves, but truly I believe
Its Maker only may enjoy it all.
Vanquished do I confess me by this passage
More than by problem of his theme was ever
O'ercome the comic or the tragic poet;
For as the sun the sight that trembles most,
Even so the memory of that sweet smile
My mind depriveth of its very self.
From the first day that I beheld her face
In this life, to the moment of this look,
The sequence of my song has ne'er been severed;
But now perforce this sequence must desist
From following her beauty with my verse,
As every artist at his uttermost.
Such as I leave her to a greater fame
Than any of my trumpet, which is bringing
Its arduous matter to a final close,
With voice and gesture of a perfect leader
She recommenced: 'We from the greatest body
Have issued to the heaven that is pure light;
Light intellectual replete with love,
Love of true good replete with ecstasy,
Ecstasy that transcendeth every sweetness.
Here shalt thou see the one host and the other
Of Paradise, and one in the same aspects
Which at the final judgment thou shalt see.'"

Paradiso, XXX. 13–45.

"Without reply I lifted up mine eyes,
And saw her, as she made herself a crown
Reflecting from herself the eternal rays.
Not from that region which the highest thunders
Is any mortal eye so far removed,
In whatsoever sea it deepest sinks,
As there from Beatrice my sight; but this
Was nothing unto me; because her image
Descended not to me by medium blurred.
'O Lady, thou in whom my hope is strong,
And who for my salvation didst endure
In Hell to leave the imprint of thy feet,
Of whatsoever things I have beheld,

As coming from thy power and from thy goodness
I recognize the virtue and the grace.
Thou from a slave hast brought me unto freedom,
By all those ways, by all the expedients,
Whereby thou hadst the power of doing it.
Preserve towards me thy magnificence,
So that this soul of mine, which thou hast healed,
Pleasing to thee be loosened from the body.'
Thus I implored; and she, so far away,
Smiled, as it seemed, and looked once more at me;
Then unto the eternal fountain turned."
Ibid., XXXI. 70–93, *Longfellow's Tr.*

The *Paradiso* was finished in 1321, thirty-one years after the death of Beatrice. Dante died in 1321. In the last canto of the *Paradiso* he says: —

"And I, who to the end of all desires
Was now approaching, even as I ought
The ardor of desire within me ended."

Dante closed the letter which he addressed to Can Grande della Scala, in which he set forth the design of the *Divine Comedy*, with the following words: —

"And because the beginning and source being found, namely, God, there is nothing further to be sought, since he is the Alpha and Omega, that is, the beginning and the end, this treatise terminates in God, *qui est benedictus in sæcula sæculorum*."

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